SERMONS

IN HONOR OF

OUR BLESSED LADY

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SERMONS

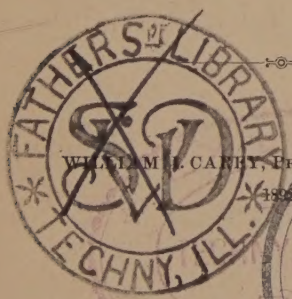
ON THE

BLESSED VIRGIN MARY,

BY THE

VERY REV. D. I. McDERMOTT,

RECTOR OF ST. MARY'S CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA, PA.



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This Volume of Sermons

In honor of

Our Blessed Lady,

Is affectionately dedicated

to the memory of the

Reverend Michael A. Sheridan,

as the author's tribute to

Fidelity that never wavered,

Counsel that ever proved wise,

Conduct that always deserved respect,

Example that still edifies,

and a name that is

in benediction.

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THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS

OR

THE SORROWS OF MARY.

A SERMON

PREACHED IN ST. MARY'S CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA,
AT THE BLESSING OF A PIETÁ,
SUNDAY, APRIL 19, 1891.

"*There stood by the cross of Jesus, His Mother.*"—John, xix, 26,

THERE is the widest difference between Protestant views and Catholic belief as to Mary's part in the Redemption. The position of the Mother of Jesus in the economy of grace depends entirely upon whether Mary was, as the former think, a mere, though worthy, instrument in bringing about the salvation of the world; or whether she was, as the latter believe, a free, intelligent agent in the work.

Protestants contend that Mary was, for the most part, the unconscious instrument of the designs that God accomplished through her, that she had no knowledge of the means by which the world would be saved, that, consequently, she

became the unwilling witness of the Passion when it was finally made manifest to her that Christ must suffer before entering into His glory. Catholics, on the other hand, hold that, before she consented to be the Mother of Jesus, Mary understood the ransom that must be paid for sinners, that she foresaw the sorrows with which the sufferings of her Son would desolate her soul, that, consequently, in consenting to co-operate with God in the work of salvation, she willingly, for the sake of souls, accepted the life-long martyrdom which the Crucifixion caused her to endure.

The Catholic view of this question must be clearly brought out before Christians can properly understand Mary's place in the Plan of Redemption, before they can understand the relation in which she stands to the Redeemed. It is what Mary consented to suffer, and actually did suffer, that gives her a right to the gratitude and the devotion of Christians, that makes her intercession all-powerful with Christ, and shows that the confidence Catholics repose in the patronage of the Blessed Virgin is well-founded.

What did Mary suffer? St. Liguori applies to her the words of Isaias: "He will crown thee with the crown of tribulation"—will crown her Queen of Martyrs. That we may know how hard it is to form any adequate idea of Mary's sorrows,

the Church applies to her the words of the Prophet Jeremias: "To what shall I compare thee, to what shall I liken thee, O daughter of Jerusalem? To what shall I equal thee, O virgin daughter of Sion? For great as the sea is thy broken-heartedness."

Who can measure the sea? While sailing across its vast expanse, the largest vessel seems but an atom on its bosom. In sight, is a great waste of water, which is but a fraction of that other mighty waste of waters which the horizon conceals from view. At certain points, the length, breadth, and depth of the sea may be measured, while at other points it stretches out and sinks down so far and so irregularly as to baffle all human efforts to accurately estimate its volume. Thus the sea, while not infinite in extent, is, humanly speaking, immeasurable.

This is why the sea is truly a picture of Mary's broken-heartedness. Now and again, definite views are obtained of certain features of Mary's sorrows, which, for the moment, seem to offer some basis for an accurate estimate of all her sufferings. When, however, an attempt is made to measure them, other aspects of the depth, the intensity, and the duration of her dolors are revealed in such bewildering proportions as to render futile all efforts to measure the sea of her

broken-heartedness. Meditation thus shows us, that Mary's sorrow, although falling short of the infinite, is measureless.

The factors that help men to form a faint, imperfect idea of Mary's sufferings are:—(1) Mary's sanctity; (2) Jesus' lovableness; and (3) Mary's foreknowledge of Christ's sufferings, and her willingness to participate in them.

As disease dulls and deadens the nerves, the sensitiveness of the body to pain, until in certain forms of sickness the power to suffer is diminished, destroyed so that the body of the afflicted one may be cut and burned without feeling any pain; so sin destroys the feelings of the heart, dries up the fountains of compassion in the soul, until the very power to sympathize with another is diminished or altogether lost. As the greatest capacity for physical suffering exists in the perfect body, so the greatest capacity for mental anguish exists in the pure soul.

Mary was sinless, preserved by a singular privilege from either original or actual sin. Her soul remained unclouded by even the shadow of any imbruting passion. She not only retained all the natural feelings of her pure heart unimpaired, but she cultivated them to the highest degree it was possible for a creature to attain. Father Faber says. "The more refined, delicate

the soul, the more excruciating its agony." "Mary's sinless body with its exquisite perfections," he says, "was delicately framed for suffering beyond all others, but that of her Son." It is, therefore, evident that Mary, both by nature and grace had the greatest capacity to love, to sympathize, and to suffer; and as she had consecrated herself entirely to God there was neither worldly interest, nor human ties to distract or divide her love. It was centered wholly in Jesus.

The maternal instinct impels mothers, sometimes, to love, to cling to their children despite the latter's utter unworthiness and depravity. Mary, however, loved Jesus because He was infinitely worthy of her affection. No mother ever had such a son. Mary's Son was both human and divine, the fruit of her chaste womb and "the splendor of the Father's glory and the figure of His substance,"—at once the Son of Mary and the Son of God. In Mary, then, was concentrated, as in one consuming flame, the strongest affection a mother ever cherished for a child, and the intensest love a creature ever bore the Creator. And since it was impossible for greater love to exist between two beings than that which existed between Mary and Jesus, there could be no greater sympathy than that of Mary with Jesus. Every suffering inflicted on

the sacred humanity of Jesus was a sword of sorrow that pierced Mary's soul.

But while Mary's power to love and Jesus' lovableness help us to form some estimate of the broken-heartedness of the Mother of Sorrows, they give us a very remote and imperfect idea of what Mary was capable of suffering, and of what she did suffer. They only show that Mary suffered more than any martyr could possibly have suffered, but they give no adequate idea of the vastness and bitterness of her sea of sorrow. They only show what Mary would have suffered if she had been an unconscious instrument in the work of Redemption up to the moment the Agony of Jesus began. They only show what would have been Mary's dolors had she been called to co-operate in the salvation of the world as were the Apostles, without any clear, well-defined idea of what Jesus would have to suffer before entering into His glory.

In order to see how immeasurably Mary's sufferings surpassed those which any human being ever endured, it is necessary to acquire some idea of her foreknowledge of Christ's Passion, of her willingness to participate in it, of the heroic, holy purpose that animated Mary when she consented to co-operate, to suffer, in the cause of man's salvation.

Mary's sanctity entitled her to the fullest confidence of the Deity as to the means by which the world's Redemption was to be accomplished. While God conceals His counsels from the proud and wicked, He confides them to the humble and innocent. Mary was selected because of her humility. She was full of grace; she had found favor with God. Upon no creature has such a eulogy been passed as that which God the Father, by the mouth of the Archangel Gabriel, pronounced npon Mary. No creature was ever admitted to that close and marvelous union that existed between Mary and the Eternal Father. Living only for God, and in God, it may well be believed that secrets were committed to her of which priest and prophet were kept in ignorance; just as Jesus communicated to John, by reason of his virginal sanctity, secrets concerning which the other Apostles dare not even question their Master. It may well be believed, that Mary knew more than the prophets of old, upon whose vivid portrayals of the sufferings of the Messias she had often meditated; that she knew more than Joseph, who learned from the Angel that Jesus would "save his people from their sins," (and every Israelite knew that without the effusion of blood there was no remission of sin); that she knew more than Simeon, whose vision of the

Passion enabled him in those forcible, expressive words, to liken Mary's sympathy with Jesus in His sufferings, to a sword of sorrow that would pierce her soul.

While the Apostles were often, during the lifetime of their Master, rebuked for their slowness to believe, their failure to understand, never once was Mary's faith or understanding rebuked. On the contrary, she is represented as keeping the divine counsels, pondering them in her heart. While the Apostles, when they spoke of Christ, before the descent of the Holy Ghost, often exhibited the densest ignorance of His true character, in and the most erroneous notions of His purpose coming into the world; while even after the Resurrection, they asked: "Wilt Thou, at this time, restore the Kingdom of Israel?"—Mary, on the other hand, showed in the MAGNIFICAT and at Cana, the fullest appreciation of His divine character, and of His coming. No doctor of the Church, with all the advantages which the complete history of Christ afforded him, has been able to formulate more correct ideas of Jesus than those clearly implied in the words Mary spoke concerning Him.

The extent of Mary's knowledge is not a mere matter of speculation. It is a matter of fact that, before the Incarnation, she was the only daughter of Israel that entertained a correct notion of the

character of the Messias. The other women of Judea regarded the coming Messias as a great temporal prince. Hence, as the time of His coming approached, a consuming desire to be the Mother of the Messias burned in the breast of every Jewish woman. With this object in view, the maid sought marriage, the wife prayed for fruitfulness, and implored the Lord to save her from sterility as from a curse.

No such ambition, however, was cherished by Mary. On the contrary, by a vow of virginity, she had made her mothership of the Messias, humanly speaking, impossible. She had such a true conception of that exalted dignity that she deemed perpetual continence and a life of sanctification in the temple necessary to prepare herself, not for the Mothership of the Messias, but to become the handmaid, the servant of the woman God would deem worthy of so high an honor. In this, what testimony does not Mary bear to that incomparable dignity to which God, regarding her humility, exalted her. No less an authority than Cardinal Newman interprets Mary's reply to the Angel: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord," as signifying that Mary simply aspired to become the servant of the Mother of the Messias.

If Mary entertained such correct ideas of the Messias before the Angel's visit, what fullness of

knowledge must she not have received through Gabriel's message and his answers to her questions! Her dialogue with the Archangel shows plainly that she was not selected as a mere instrument, but as a free, intelligent agent; that she was free to refuse to become the Mother of the Messias, and that she consented only after having attained to a clear understanding of what would be required of her.

"She was troubled," the Gospel says, at the Angel's words, and asked, in her own mind, the meaning of his salutation. The Angel having allayed her fears, Mary asks plainly: "How shall this be done, for I know not man?" Mary did not blindly consent, like the Apostles, to participate in the work of the Messias, and afterwards, like them, fail in her part when it came to drink of the cup of Christ's bitterness. She consented only after she had known what sacrifice that consent would demand of her; and therefore, she never afterwards shrank from what was laid upon her:—"Be it done unto me according to thy word."

It is clear that Mary could have absolutely refused to become the Mother of the Messias; nevertheless, her acceptance was so deliberate, was given with such full knowledge of the sufferings it involved, and with such willing obedience to the counsel of God; and consequently,

was so meritorious, that the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of Elizabeth, declared Mary blessed for having consented: "Blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished in thee WHICH WERE SPOKEN TO THEE BY THE LORD."—Luke I, 45.

If, at the time of the Annunciation, Mary did not know the sorrows she would have to endure in consequence of her consent, why should she be called blessed for having believed? Why, as the Gospel says, was she troubled? Why should she not have gladly and promptly accepted the honor, so much coveted by the other women of her day? Why should she not have been profoundly grateful for the honor—if the sword of sorrow it contained was concealed from her? Mary was blessed in her belief—singularly and especially blessed—because she made the voluntary sacrifice of her maternal affections in offering her Son as a Victim of propitiation for the sins of the world. Mary was superlatively blessed among all the friends of God, —she was also troubled in this that she consented to become a mother in order that her Son might suffer a cruel death to redeem the world. In this, consisted Mary's co-operation in the work of Redemption. She knowingly, willingly, in obedience to the Eternal Father, consented to supply from the fountain of her life-blood, the Victim,

the Lamb that taketh away the sins of the world. In this, does she strikingly resemble God the Father, who "spared not His own Son," as St. Paul says, "but delivered Him up for us all."

Mary's foreknowledge of the conditions of Redemption, her heroic devotion to man's salvation, and her willing co-operation with God, even to the extent of conceiving a Son for the express purpose of offering Him a victim for the sins of men, must enlighten every effort to form some conception of the magnitude of Mary's sorrow. What love for God, what zeal for souls must have glowed in her virgin breast when she willingly consented to co-operate in the Redemption by making such a sacrifice!

"Greater love than this," says Christ, "no man can have than to give his life for his friends." What good mother would not endure a thousand deaths herself rather than devote a well-beloved son to death! Would not Abraham more willingly have consented to die himself than sacrifice his only son, Isaac? Because Abraham in consenting to sacrifice Isaac showed his obedience to God, rose above the love of his child, showed his readiness at God's command to do violence to all the feelings of nature, to blast all those hopes of a numerous posterity which were centered in his son, that holy patriarch is regarded

as a model of unselfish fidelity to God. But what did Abraham's contemplated sacrifice of Isaac cost him in comparison with what the sacrifice of Jesus cost Mary? What comparison between Isaac and Jesus? What proportion does a father's love bear to a mother's? Only that of the shadow to the substance, only that of the type to the reality! Mary, in consenting to the awful sacrifice of Jesus on Calvary, simply immolated herself by doing a holy violence to the strongest and tenderest ties, to feelings which could exist only between the Virgin Mother and the God-Man, Jesus Christ.

What the mothers of men are called upon to suffer is often mercifully concealed from them until the hour of affliction arrives. To Mary, however, all her sorrows arising from the Passion of Christ were fully revealed before His conception in her womb. Men may contemplate in itself each incident in Christ's life, as separate and distinct from other incidents. They may meditate only on the Joyful or Glorious mysteries, without for a moment considering the Sorrowful mysteries. They may even sympathize with Christ in His cruelest tortures only to fill their own souls with peace, through the compunction thus excited for their sins, fill them with hope of salvation, with admiration for the infinite love of

Jesus for sinners. This method of meditation has led men to regard each mystery of the Passion as distinct and disconnected from the other mysteries. Many have thus fallen into the error that Mary's attention like theirs was fixed only upon one event or mystery of the Passion at a time; that each suffering of Christ involved her in a grief peculiarly its own, and bore no relation to that of the mystery that either preceded or followed it.

How different was it with Mary! To her, Christ's whole life was more than an open book. At a glance, she saw it all uninterruptedly from Nazareth to Calvary, from the manger to the tomb. For her, there were no Joyful mysteries followed for a brief period by the Sorrowful. No: from the words spoken by the Angel of the Annunciation to the words spoken by the Angel of the Resurrection, all were for her Sorrowful mysteries. She always saw the end. "The sword of Simeon's prophecy was the Crucifixion." Her prevision placed her at all times in the shadow of the Cross, where, (loving Mother that she was,) she loved sinners so tenderly, so unselfishly, that in obedience to the Divine Decree, she freely, lovingly, continually, during thirty-four years, offered up her most dear Son on the altar of her heart, as a victim for the sins of men. Mary

always stood in the shadow of the Cross.

People who have undergone the anguish of some great sorrow are generally silent, pensive, sad, even amid the brightest and most joyful surroundings. The shadow of some past affliction however, is not to be compared with those expectations of future woe which cast their shadows towards men,—shadows which lengthen and darken as time flies. Experience shows that the memory of past afflictions is more or less short-lived; distraction has mitigated their poignancy; time has consigned them, perhaps, to oblivion. The shadows of coming evil, however, cannot be forecast, are immeasurable; they are like the gathing storm that comes on with such ominous threatenings as to make the stoutest heart quail, to blanch the cheek of the bravest, to make men wither away from fear of what may come upon them. Distance only excites mysterious terrors concerning anticipated afflictions. At times, they become to the mind so present, so real, so terrible, human nature suffers so much in expectation, that agonies are endured worse than a thousand deaths.

Let those then that would form an idea of her sorrows, look at Mary, from the moment of the Incarnation, standing in spirit as truly under the shadow of the Cross as when she stood by the

Cross of Jesus on Mount Calvary. During those thirty-four years of martyrdom, her knowledge of Jesus' sufferings did not increase, but her realization of them became more and more vivid and painful in proportion as she beheld Jesus increase in wisdom, and age, and grace before God and men. Her power to love and her power to suffer increased day by day, until she saw Jesus offer Himself a bleeding, dying Victim on the Tree.

It was this enlightenment that made the exceeding bitterness of Mary's sorrows flow from her very love of Jesus. The love of Jesus was the sole support and consolation of the martyrs in their sufferings. St. Augustine says of St. Lawrence: "Intoxicated with the wine of divine love, he felt neither torments nor death." Father Faber says: "The grand support of the martyrs is that their inward eye is bent on Jesus. It is because what is within them is stronger than that which is without them, that they are joyful amid their torments. It is not that their agonies are not real, but that they are tempered, counteracted by the succors which the soul supplies, from the grace and love with which their generous Master is at the moment filling them to overflowing."

But Jesus was the whole cause of His Mother's

grief. Therefore, St. Liguori, quoting Diez, says: "Whilst all the other martyrs are represented as bearing the instruments of their suffering and death, St. Paul with the sword, St. Andrew with the cross, St. Lawrence with the gridiron, Mary is represented (in the PIETÁ) as supporting her dead Son, because Jesus Himself was the instrument of her martyrdom." Father Faber says: "Every look of Jesus drove the sword deeper into Mary's soul. Every sound of His voice, while it lifted her on the wings of maternal transport, brought with it its own bitterness, which pierced all the keener and deeper for the joy that had gone with it. Every action of His came to her with a multitude of pains in which past and present blended in one terrible prevision, which was ever present to her blessed soul. The very sight of Jesus was her torture. Jesus, the joy of the martyrs, was the executioner of His Mother."

What more touching, entrancing, than the scene enacted in the Stable at Bethlehem! The winter winds were joyful with the music of the multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and singing "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will"; the dismal cave was lighted up with the glory of heaven; angels and wondering, adoring shepherds came

to worship the new-born Saviour; and Mary and Joseph lovingly, adoringly contemplated the Heavenly Babe. Had that scene, which has filled the earth for centuries with light and gladness, no joy for Mary? Did not its splendor for the time-being dispel the shadow of the Cross? Did not Mary, in the words of Holy Scripture, rejoice "because a Man was born into the world," and, for the moment, turn the eye of her soul from the vision of Calvary?

Alas! no. The joyous light of Bethlehem only projected the shadow of the Cross more distinctly. The scene in the Stable, it is true, touched Mary's soul, caused rivers of love to well out of her heart, but only that the thought of Calvary might instantly change them into an ocean of bitterness. As Mary laid the Divine Infant in the manger, as she saw His little arms stretched out as if to embrace her, she thought of the time when that same Jesus would be laid upon the Cross, when His arms would be stretched out in cruelest torture, in infinite love, to embrace the whole human race; as she listened to the song of the angels, she thought of the blasphemies with which men would demand His death; as she looked on the reverent shepherds, she thought of the wild beasts that would put him to death; as she looked on the glory of heaven

lighting the first opening of His eyes, she thought of the gloom that would fall upon their closing; as she saw earth and heaven rejoicing over His birth, she thought of how both man and God would forsake Him at death; as she clasped Him to her bosom, she thought of the time when He would be laid at last, as you see Him in this group of statuary, all bleeding and bruised, wounded and lifeless, on her breast. Thus, even at Bethlehem, Mary stood in the shadow of the Cross.

There are pictures, some of which are regarded as inspired in their conception and miraculous in their salutary influence, that afford clearer views of Mary's ever-present sorrows, than any illustration that human tongues can offer. The painting of OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL HELP, for example, represents the Blessed Virgin as revolving in her mind the prophecies concerning the Messias. With a face full of sweetness and sadness, she gazes upon the Child Jesus whom she holds upon her arm, only to see Him startle at the vision of His future sufferings, the instruments of His passion—the reed, the crown of thorns, the nails, the spear, the cross,—as they loom up in the dim distance.

Then, again, there is the painting that has suggested this sermon, and that may be called THE

SHADOW OF THE CROSS. It represents a scene in the workshop at Nazareth. Joseph is employed at the carpenter's bench, Mary sits plying the distaff. A bright summer day pours a flood of light into the room. Jesus, a beautiful youth, with filial piety informing every feature, advances with outstretched arms towards His Mother to embrace her, and to imprint a kiss upon her cheek. O! what happiness would this scene have been to Mary, with what joy would it have dilated her soul, if only the future had been concealed from her! But, alas! looking at Jesus, the Mother's joy is turned into grief, because she sees the body and outstretched arms of her Son cast the Shadow of the Cross on the opposite wall!

Did time permit, and were it necessary for your instruction, to exhibit further the effect of Mary's foreknowledge in increasing the number of her sufferings and in intensifying their bitterness, other pictures might be drawn to show how her prophetic vision was constantly turning the joys of her exceptional motherhood into the bitterest and intensest of sorrows. Suffice to quote what Father Faber says: "Every action (of Jesus) became a suffering, every source of joy a fountain of bitterness. Every look at Jesus, every movement that He made, every word that He uttered,

—all stirred and diffused the bitterness that was in her. The very lapse of time itself was bitterness, for she saw Gethsemane and Calvary coming down the stream towards her. Postures and attitudes in which she saw her beloved Son had some startling likeness in them to something which was to occur in the Passion. When a carpenter's tool pressed against the palm of His hand, she saw the wound of the nail there. The white brow of boyhood often seemed as if it had a coronal of rosy spots around where the thorns should be. The Passion became an inevitable vision to her. She could not look away. Everything about it was commuted into bitterness. The process went on most successfully when the sun was shining brightest, and the Mother's heart expanded to its light and heat. She belonged to sorrow. It had drawn her life under its dark waters. Her life was hidden in the Heart of Jesus, amid gloomy forms, appalling shadows, dread insights into horrible gulfs of sin, thunders and lightnings of divine wrath, frenzies of lawless demons, excesses of human cruelty, and a very living show of the instruments of the Passion."

And if this was Mary's cruel portion during the Joyful mysteries, who can imagine what must have been the bitterness of her grief during those cruel scenes that followed, when every torture of

Jesus, like a sword, actually pierced her soul!

It was during the Sorrowful mysteries, that the shadow of the Cross constantly deepened, that the sufferings of Mary daily grew more intense. The shadow became the dread reality. Mary actually stood by the Cross to which Jesus was nailed. The sight of the Son's sufferings immolated the Mother, a living victim on the Altar of the World's Salvation. Hitherto, the stripes, thorns, nails, lance had been invisible, had had their existence only in the mind,—now, they are awful realities that afflict body and soul.

"Sense," says Father Faber, "is more than prevision, something different from it. The senses interrupt that interior tranquility in which the darkest visions may possess the soul, without disturbing it. The senses have special things of their own in sights, sounds, and touches of grief; they pierce the flesh, causing it to tremble with chilly pains, torturing the nerves, freezing and firing the blood by turns, stabbing the brain like daggers, and bruising the convulsed heart, as if it were within a vice of iron. It was the eye-witnessing of the Passion, which made Mary's martyrdom to be in her body as well as in her soul, because it made every pulse a beating instrument of pain. What a fearful thing for a mother, particularly one of such exquisite sensi-

bilities and profound love as Mary, to have to follow her only child through every step of that bloody drama!"

Considering the intensity and bitterness of her sufferings in body and soul, the length of time she endured these sufferings, the question arises: Could mortal have made greater sacrifices, or have suffered more in behalf of any cause, than Mary made and suffered by consenting to be the intelligent agent through whom the salvation of the world would be brought about? What did patriarch, or prophet, or apostle, or martyr do for the salvation of men in comparison with what Mary suffered for it? If those who at Christ's invitation abandoned their boats and nets to follow Him, shall hereafter sit on thrones and judge the world, what must Mary's place be in the Kingdom of God, since she in obedience to the Divine Will "delivered up for us all" her well-beloved Son, Jesus Christ?

Let the Redeemed learn, then, what they owe to Mary! Let them think of the sufferings she endured for thirty-four years, in consequence of her maternal instincts leading her to most earnestly desire that the chalice of suffering might pass from her Divine Son, while her obedience to the Divine Counsels and her devotion to man's salvation, doing a holy violence to her love, forced

her to say: "Let the will of the Father be done; let my Son suffer death to redeem His people from their sins!" thus making it her higher love to do the will of God than to enjoy the companionship of Jesus.

Let them look often and thoughtfully upon that scene on Mount Calvary! Let them meditate on Mary's holy heroism. Let them think of her as a woman, weak in her sex, as a mother, wounded in her tenderest affections, as sorrowful unto death, yet tearless, unwavering in her purpose to fulfil the promise made to God through Gabriel, willing to drain the chalice of her affliction, calm when it came to make the sacrifice required for the salvation of the world, resolved to witness the end, to see Jesus blot out the handwriting against sinners with the most precious blood He had drawn from the fountains of her heart, to stand by the Cross until she heard: *Consummatum est*, IT IS FINISHED,—until she saw her Son become the Saviour of the world, and the children of wrath become the children of God, until the death of Jesus left her amid the shadows of Calvary in a desolation so unutterable that earth has no name for its anguish.

Let Christians look upon Mary crowned by Jesus on Calvary, in the words of Isaias, "with the crown of tribulation," and then they will

understand why Mary takes an interest in their spiritual welfare; why she jealously guards the affair of their salvation in life; why she bends all her energies at the hour of death to protect souls from the assaults of the demon. Then they will understand why that unfailing devotion which Mary displayed from Nazareth to Calvary, to the cause of the world's redemption, she now exhibits in behalf of each and every one of the redeemed,—to the end that the precious blood of Jesus shall not have been shed for any soul in vain.

THE TESTIMONY OF MARY,

THE QUEEN OF PROPHETS.

A SERMON

DELIVERED AT THE BLESSING OF THE CORNER-STONE OF THE CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, PHILADELPHIA, SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 1890.

"I make doctrine to shine forth to all as the morning light, and I will declare it afar off.

"I will penetrate to all the lower parts of the earth, and will behold all that sleep, and will enlighten all that hope in the Lord.

"I will yet pour out doctrine as propheey, and will leave it to them that seek wisdom, and will not cease to instruct their offspring unto the holy age."—*Ecclesiasticus xxiv., 44-47.*

YOUR GRACE, REVEREND FATHERS, BELOVED BRETHREN:—The corner-stone, which you are assembled, this afternoon, to see blessed and placed in position, is the symbol of Jesus Christ, who, St. Paul says, is the chief corner-stone of the Church, the corner-stone, cut without hands from the holy mountain of truth. The corner-stone is intended to convey an idea of the strength and stability of the Church of Christ. The chief object, then, of this ceremony is, to teach all men that the truths, moral and dogmatic, upon which the Church rests, as upon an indestructible foundation, are unchanging and unchangeable; that,

like Christ Himself, they are the same to-day as they were yesterday, and as they shall be forever; that these truths constitute that immovable, impregnable Rock upon which Christ built His Church; that consequently, the gates of hell will pour forth torrents of error against the Church in vain. The foundation-stone laid here to-day, represents, then, those doctrines which have been at all times and in every place, the same; and which constitute the corner-stone of that great mystic temple of God, the Roman Catholic Church,—the Church of all ages and nations.

For the preservation and propagation of these doctrines, temples are everywhere ereeted to the true and living God, generally in honor, and under the patronage, of Christ's faithful servants and chosen friends, whose lives are the best illustrations of the influence and tendency of these doctrines, whose heroic virtues are the legitimate fruits of these doctrines, whose holy examples are the most efficacious preaching of these doctrines, whose words and works are the sure defence of these doctrines. Pre-eminent among the great army of the elect which Christ has raised up to defend and to enforce His teachings, stands Mary, the Mother of Jesus, in whose honor this church will be built.

This temple will be erected to God in Mary's

honor, because, of all creatures, Mary has been the most highly endowed and honored by Heaven; because her life most faithfully corresponded to the singular graces and dignities bestowed upon her; because, by purity and holiness, she attained a position above saints and angels and archangels; because in her exalted virtues, she approached nearest, and became most like, to her Divine Son; because her example has exercised the most salutary influence on the world; because imitation of Mary has ever led men to Jesus, by inspiring obedience to His precepts and love of His counsels; because Mary not only shows a loving solicitude for the salvation of souls, but also aids them in the work by her powerful intercession; because Mary, in the scheme of Redemption, is inseparable from Christ; and because Mary, in a most signal manner, has proved to be the safeguard of religion, the bulwark of Christian Doctrine, and the destruction of heresy.

While men see how prominent Mary has always been in the devotion of Christians; while they acknowledge how powerful her influence has been in promoting the moral well-being of the children of God, either by guarding their innocence, or by recalling them to repentance; while they admit Mary has thus prevented the perversion of the intellect by saving her clients

from corruption of heart, (for experience shows it is only guilt that has need of lies, that innocence and truth are ever companions); while all men have, in this way, recognized Mary's influence as the best preventive of heresy, as the sure defence of the true faith, as the strongest support of sound doctrine, because that influence is the great conservator of good morals, yet few have recognized that Mary has been a great dogmatic power in the world, that she has "made doctrine shine forth as the morning light," that she has "declared it afar off," that she has "poured out doctrine as prophecy," that, at times, she has proved the only barrier between faith and unbelief. Few have realized fully the meaning of that *Antiphon* in her office, which says: "Rejoice, O Virgin Mary! for thou alone hast destroyed all heresies in the whole world."

To the unreflecting, how strange, how strong, the language of this *Antiphon* must appear! Strange to say, Mary has destroyed ALL heresies, in the face of the fact that it was no part of her office to teach the truth, to combat error. Strong language to say, Mary ALONE has destroyed all heresies, without the aid of doctor, martyr, or Apostle, whose chief function was to teach the truth and confirm it with their testimony. "Mary, thou alone hast destroyed all heresies in the whole world."

Strange, strong, as the language of the *Antiphon* seems, it is not, as some might think, the language of some ignorant devotee, thoughtlessly uttered during some pious rhapsody; it is not the language of some learned client of Mary, betrayed in a moment of enthusiastic admiration, into exaggeration; it is not the language of any man or number of men.

It is the language of the Church, who weighs well her words. It is not only the deliberately declared judgment of the Church, but a judgment the Church never tires of repeating.

An examination of the *Antiphon* will not only prove its language strictly, rigorously true, but also show that this eulogy of Mary redounds to the greater glory of Jesus. That the credit this *Antiphon* gives to Mary cannot derogate from the credit due to Jesus, is evident from the fact that the Church teaches, Mary owes all her prerogatives to her Son. Mary's power to crush heresies is Christ's gift to His Mother, and therefore, no more detracts from Christ's prerogatives than the effulgence of the moon detracts from the brightness of the sun.

The very language the Church uses in the Office, in likening Mary to the moon and Jesus to the sun, indicates that the *Antiphon* excludes the very thought of a comparison between Mother

and Son on a basis of equality. This is also evident from the fact that the testimony of the one is so essentially different in kind from that of the other, that no comparison will hold. Mary's testimony is not made valuable by her power, but because God has signally verified it; whereas, Christ's testimony is valuable because confirmed by His miracles, the evidence of His omnipotence. This *Antiphon* does not make Mary's testimony greater than Christ's: rather, it makes her testimony serve the purpose of a light to fix attention on His testimony, in which was "the finger of God." In this *Antiphon*, the Church wishes to make it plain, that God has made Mary a witness to the truth, and that her testimony is so efficacious, not because it is, in itself, greater or even equal to other evidences of the truth, but because it is of such a nature that it is impossible to obscure it by sophistry, or weaken it by suspicion.

In the trial of a cause, it is often seen that a skilful or unscrupulous advocate can so manipulate and distort the testimony, as to turn its very strength into an element of suspicion; can so divert the attention of the jury from the real issue, and fix it on false issues, as to make the best portions of the evidence appear doubtful, weak, worthless. Thus would he secure a verdict against truth and justice, did not some

comparatively unimportant part of the evidence baffle all his efforts to obscure, conceal, or destroy it. His failure to remove this one obstacle to his success, fixes attention on it, makes it important; for it is not only safe from his attacks, but it establishes the genuineness and value of the testimony that was hanging in the balance, and thus gains the case, just as Horatius, by reason of his peculiar position at the bridge, was enabled, single-handed, to repulse the enemy, to protect the army, and to save Rome.

To those who have given the subject attention, it is well known, that the enemies of Christianity have not been, at times, without a measure of seeming success in assailing the miracles of Christ. In the endeavor to explain them away by arguments both plausible and learned, they have brought confusion and doubt into many minds, leading some to reject, and others to hesitate about accepting them. Yet they have always found it impossible to call Mary's testimony in doubt. It not only withstands all their attacks, but also shows how delusive, how false, are their arguments against the other evidences of Christianity.

There is a case in the civil order that affords an apposite illustration of what has been said. When a son wishes to make good his claim to his father's property and titles, it is not sufficient

to show that he has merited them by loyal service and tender regard for his father, that his father recognized him as his son, appreciated his conduct, lavished many tokens of affection on him, and, in many ways, signified his intention to make him his heir. No: this is not sufficient to make good his claim. He must, moreover, prove that his mother was his father's lawful, virtuous wife. Without this proof, all other evidence avails not to establish his claim; with it, no other is required. Once his mother's position has been legally established, his father's property and titles pass to him without let or hindrance. It is almost the same in the order of grace. Once the position of Mary has been fixed, once her claim to be Mother of God has been established by indisputable evidence, no other testimony is required to prove the divinity of Christ, the truth of the Christian religion, to refute all heresies.

How can this assertion be proved? How can its truth be so evinced that men cannot gainsay it, must accept it?

The one central, all-important fact in the Christian religion is the Mystery of the Incarnation. Once establish that the Son of God became man in the womb of the Virgin Mary through the power and operation of the Holy Ghost, and you have proved every Christian doctrine, you

have destroyed every heresy. All Christian doctrines emanate from this mystery, just as rays of light emerge from the sun. Every error is disproved by it, just as the morning light dissipates the darkness.

The Incarnation is not only the great mystery of Christianity, but in the order of time, it is the first mystery. Men may, therefore, logically demand proof of this first and greatest mystery before they consent to listen to proofs of other mysteries or doctrines. They may justly say to Christians: Before you quote the arguments of theologians, the testimony of martyrs, the miracles of Christ and His Apostles, prove to us that Jesus was miraculously conceived in the womb of Mary, that he was the Son of God. If (they may say), you cannot prove this fact by credible witnesses, it is useless to adduce any further argument from theologian or martyr, from the words and works of Christ, in behalf of other doctrines; useless to adduce it from the successful propagation of those doctrines, or from their salutary influence on mankind.

Unbelievers may say to Christians: Assume as a fact, the miraculous conception of Jesus, in the very outset of your argument in favor of the Christian religion, and it is easy to form an exalted opinion of His doctrines, to accept the

most exaggerated stories of His works, until you even delude yourselves into ascribing miracles to Him,—in short, into believing in His divinity. It is, therefore, manifestly illogical, (they may say), to make use of the natural results of an unproven, perhaps, false supposition, to establish the fundamental doctrine of Christianity. They may, therefore, properly ask: Where are the witnesses to this first and main fact? What is their testimony? And what is that testimony worth?

Humanly speaking, Mary is the only witness to the Mystery of the Incarnation. The Apostles, unaided by revelation, could have learned from Mary alone of the Angel's visit and salutation, of the Holy Ghost coming upon her, of the Most High overshadowing her, and that, therefore, what was born of her was holy, the Son of God. The greatest mystery of the Christian religion rests then, historically, on the testimony of Mary alone. What is her testimony? What is it worth?

If Mary is the only witness what is there to corroborate, to make her testimony conclusive? Certainly, the mere word of one witness is not evidence sufficient to establish the truth of such an important doctrine!

In confirmation of the truth of what she related of the Mystery of the Incarnation, Mary formulated

no argument, she worked no miracle, she shed not her blood; but she confirmed her testimony by a sign so simple, that all can understand its meaning and force; so striking, that none can be ignorant of its existence; so great, that all must admit its sufficiency. In confirmation of what she related concerning the Incarnation, Mary prophesied: "All generations shall call me blessed." "I will pour out doctrine as prophecy."

The value of this sign is easily perceived.

There is this difference between prophecy and other evidences of the truth. While men are not, at all times, able to detect the sophistry of an argument, or to decide whether it is intelligent devotion to truth or the blind infatuation of error that makes martyrs—heresy has its martyrs—or to determine the value of a miracle, or the competency of the testimony on which it rests,—all men are as competent to judge whether a prophecy has been made, and whether it has come to pass, as they are to know that a promise made to them, ten days ago, has been kept.

Christ Himself tells us, there will arise false christs and false prophets, that they will show forth such signs and wonders as to deceive many, and almost lead the elect into error. It is manifest, that the craft that can impose lying miracles upon many, can not bring to pass, can not fulfil

false prophecies two hundred years, much less two thousand years, after the deceivers who uttered them, had passed away. Dead impostors can not keep up a permanent deception.

Of the fact that Mary prophesied: "Behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed," all men, if they will, may be absolutely sure. Of the fact that the prophecy has been fulfilled, all men are the witnesses.

In order that the sign given by Mary may be fully appreciated, it is necessary to observe here, that there are prophecies *and* prophecies. There are prophecies, so-called on account of some resemblance to true prophecies, mere predictions which any one observant of causes at present operating, or mindful of the lessons of experience, may make with reasonable expectation of their fulfilment. Men know that like causes under like circumstances will produce similar results. Hence, there are so-called prophets, whose predictions are based on this self-evident truth. For example, political prophets foretold our late civil war. They saw elements of strife fermenting in slavery which would lead to a war between the North and the South. They saw further that the temper of both sections would never permit of an amicable adjustment of the slavery question. Men know that those who inherit large fortunes

without any experience of the difficulties attendant on their accumulation, spend them recklessly—come easy, go easy. Therefore, there is no difficulty in predicting, in a given case, (the disposition of the heir being known,) that he will die in poverty. These predictions are based on present indications visible to every observant eye; they extend not beyond an individual, or a nation, or a generation, and as the wonder would be if they did not come to pass, there can be no merit in foretelling them. They can no more be strictly called prophecies than the assertion that two trains moving toward each other on the same track, if not stopped, will collide, is a prophecy.

On the other hand, there are prophecies properly so-called, which neither present circumstances nor lessons from the past will enable any one to make, which present indications would rather pronounce false; prophecies, of which only Omniscience could foresee the fulfilment, and which only Omnipotence could bring to pass. Mary's prophecy belongs to this class. "Behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed," is, from every point of view, a true prophecy. It is a prophecy which only the one who knew the Mystery of the Incarnation could make. If the Incarnation were not, to Mary's knowledge, an accomplished fact, although hidden from the rest

of the world, there was nothing to base such a prediction on, nothing in the circumstances attending its utterance, to favor its fulfilment. Mary had no power to bring it to pass during her lifetime, and no friends to bring it to pass after her death. Yet she confidently declared to Elizabeth: "From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed."

Why should Mary have concluded that her name would be familiar to all who would know her Divine Son? Why should Mary have thought her name would be blessed by almost all who would confess the divinity of Christ?

Is it usual among men to couple the names of obscure mothers with the names of sons who have become renowned? How many have heard of the mothers of the world's heroes? Very few! How many know the history, the characteristics, even the names, of the mothers of illustrious men? Scarcely any! The most notorious infidel of our day, in a lecture on Shakespeare, says: "Of his mother we know little, but her beautiful name of Mary. In those days, little of woman was written, except that they were born, married, and died. When men became great, nobody thought of looking up their ancestry on their mother's side." How then did Mary know, that she would prove the exception, that all generations should call her

blessed? Whence did she know how future generations would regard her?

One of the most uncertain of things is the reputation men will enjoy after their death. During life, men of power, wealth and patronage may command respect, enjoy fame; but it is folly to count on honor after death. Even of those who deserve grateful remembrance, how few receive it! Of how many of these, may it not be said, "The good (which men do) is oft interred with their bones"! Is not the world witness of the failure of many to perpetuate their names after death, who, in life, enjoyed honor and fame? It is said of an equestrian statue erected to a French King, on the *Pont Neuf*, Paris, that of the thousands who have come to see it, all admire the horse, while but few ever ask who the rider is. Thus, he who would have made his name more enduring than brass, only succeeded in giving the world a magnificent specimen of horse-flesh in bronze.

If the Incarnation was not an accomplished fact when Mary uttered the prophecy: "All generations shall call me blessed," what was there to secure its fulfilment? Mary was poor, obscure, not known in her tribe, outside her kinsfolk and neighbors. In the eyes of the world, she had done nothing to signalize herself, to make friends, to create a devoted following. She was, in this,

most unlike her divine Son, who had gone about doing good to men, eliciting, even as a man, the admiration and gratitude of the world. Her husband had been a poor carpenter. Just before this prophecy was published to the world, her Son had suffered death as a felon on the cross; and both Jew and Roman had consigned his memory to obloquy, because He had died as a blasphemer and as a traitor, as the enemy of the Holy Place and of Cæsar.

If the Incarnation was not an accomplished fact, this prophecy concerned one who had done nothing to commend her to the gratitude and benedictions of her own people, much less to that of generations to come. It concerned one who, if the Incarnation was not a fact, had assumed (as Joseph suspected, unjustly), the responsibility of mother before having acquired the dignity of wife, and who could, therefore, have hoped to become notorious only by reason of her shame. If there had been no Incarnation, this prophecy could have originated only in a disordered mind, without divine or human warrant for its utterance; and, like all the silly vaporings of the insane, would have fallen upon men's ears, from its very utterance, barren of any effect.

Mary, then, prophesied when, according to all

human foresight, passing events would give the lie to her words. She prophesied not only what would take place in her own time, but what would happen thousands of years after her death. She prophesied not only what her own people would do, but what peoples whose very existence was then unknown, would do. If her prophecy has been fulfilled, none but Him who knows all things could have enlightened her to make it, and none but Him whose power extends from generation to generation, could have fulfilled it.

Has the prophecy been fulfilled? Have all generations called Mary blessed? What evidence is there of the fulfilment of this prophecy?

When people are unable to make choice of an article because of the number, variety and value of the objects presented for their selection, they are said to suffer from "an embarassment of riches." If this saying can ever be employed in a case where the number, variety, and force of proofs are embarassing, it is certainly applicable to the evidence proving the fulfilment of the prophecy, "All generations shall call me blessed." One cannot adduce all the proofs, and one is puzzled to select the strongest and most striking where all are striking and strong.

One of the strangest difficulties that ever confronted a defender of a proposition is to find, that

of all those who argue against it, there is not one who really denies it, there is not one who, in spite of himself, does not admit it; to find that those who object to the proposition unwittingly furnish thereby the strongest proofs of its truth. It is strange, yet indisputable, that those most opposed to calling Mary blessed, complain that more devotion is exhibited to her than to any other creature. It is also a fact that, in condemning devotion to Mary, they unwittingly furnish incontestable proof that her prophecy has been literally fulfilled, that all generations *have* called Mary blessed; for they complain, that all generations have so honored her, have so exaggerated her prerogatives, have exhibited so much devotion to her, as to have detracted from the honor due to Christ, as, in short, to have made Mary usurp the place of Jesus.

In the mouths of those opposed to Mary's blessedness are found not only admissions of the fulfilment of this prophecy, but statements, proofs, that it has been fulfilled in so marked a degree, that they are actually scandalized at the extent and fulsomeness of Mary's praises. Many years ago, a writer in the MERCERSBURG REVIEW, in an article on patristic study, told his fellow-Protestants that they would find no relief in the writings of the early Fathers from what he was

pleased to style the "superstitions" of the Papacy in regard to the Virgin Mary. It would be better (he said) for Protestants to return unreservedly to the Rome of to-day than to submit themselves to the system Jerome, Augustine and the Gregories bequeathed to nations. Those early champions and expounders of the faith (he admitted) had worshipped God, had adored the Son of God; yet, when they mustered all the powers of their eloquence, when they caught fire and swelled, as if inspired, when their discourses are filled with interjections, then their pages are always found to flash and sparkle with commendations of Mary, the Mother of God!

From the time that Gabriel and Elizabeth proclaimed Mary "blessed among women," her praises have resounded in ages so distant, in climes so different, that they have been sung at every hour and in every form of human speech. The few discordant voices that have been raised against the harmony that has filled the earth, but serve to make men appreciate more and more the sweetness, intensity, and volume of that song of benediction that has for centuries rolled around the world, just as the child with tiny shell trying to empty the ocean into a hole dug on its shore, but serves to make men realize more and more the immeasurable vastness and the exhaustless

depths of the sea.

Not only human speech, prose and poetry, is laid under contribution to praise the statesman or hero whom the world esteems, but every art is constrained to do him honor. Painters and sculptors, in color, in stone, in bronze, invest his image with everything pleasing, great, noble, good. Monuments and temples are erected to perpetuate his fame. Artist vies with artist in immortalizing the great one's exploits, not only because they find them subjects worthy of their talent, but because the people require this honor paid their favorite. This much men do, to perpetuate the memory of those who have deserved well of the world in secular matters. View Mary's prophecy in the light of this fact. Take the Virgin of virgins, as she appears in Christian art,—in painting, sculpture, architecture,—and does not art in trumpet tones tell, that all generations have called her blessed?

The great Baptist preacher of London, Mr. Spurgeon, on his return from a visit to the Continent, told his congregation that he had tired of its picture galleries because they contained scarcely anything but paintings of the Virgin Mary; that he had seen the Virgin represented in every conceivable style of beauty, from the classic Greek features of the Italian artists down to the

Dutch daubs of the painters of Holland; that if all the paintings he had seen of the Madonna were collected together, they would fill a gallery fourteen miles long. He did not say how long a gallery would be required to hold the paintings he did not see. In a word, this Protestant minister had seen the Blessed Virgin represented in all the types of womanhood which the different centuries and nations had considered the best, from the picture at Bologna painted by St. Luke, down to that of the artist of to-day on whose canvas the colors are not yet dry.

What is true of Mary in painting, is true of her in sculpture. It would be as easy for men to snatch a star from the firmament, as to blot Mary out of art.

The fulfilment of this prophecy is most strikingly seen in architecture, in the numerous churches erected to God in Mary's honor. In Philadelphia alone, there are twelve churches erected by Catholic congregations, not to speak of two in course of erection, nor of those erected by Protestants, to honor so many titles of Mary. In the cities of the old world, Mary's temples are more numerous and more magnificent than our own. Even some of the churches converted during the "Reformation" to the service of the new creed, still bear Mary's name, still retain the

statue of Mother and Child in the niche over the main entrance. Many of these temples have stood for centuries, and conjointly with those in course of erection to-day, tell of devotion to Mary, and declare that all generations have called her blessed.

One church there is abroad, that here deserves especial mention, not only because it is in many respects the most beautiful church in the world, but because its architectural eloquence most happily and tellingly illustrates this theme, being the very embodiment in stone of Mary's prophecy.

It is the Cathedral of Milan, erected to honor the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the very title this church will bear. It is, in all its parts, from foundation-stone to loftiest minaret, even its roof, constructed of white marble. Its style is Gothic. The principal feature of its ornamentation consists in innumerable marble statues, six thousand of which are of life and of heroic size. At first glance, it seems as if the architect intended these statues to serve the purpose of ornamentation only; those in the interior, with their pedestals and canopies, to break the monotony of lofty columns and great spaces, to serve as capitals for pillars and spans for arches; those on the exterior, to relieve the plainness of walls and buttresses, and to serve as finials for countless minarets and spires. When,

however, one ascends to a dizzy height in the tower, and looks on the immense structure below, standing in the square, like a forest of statuary, and then turns his eyes to the great statue of Mary, raised high above all, he for the first time realizes, why that Cathedral was thus designed, and that those statues serve more than the purpose of mere ornamentation, more than the purpose of honoring the saints they represent. He realizes that they are there to proclaim and emphasize a great truth,—that all those statues, in their thoughtfully-conceived array, unite as in a chorus of sublime harmony to Mary, high above them, to whose throne of supereminent glory, their thousands of voices rise and blend, as in solemn testimony to the truth of her prophecy: "All generations shall call me blessed."

On a bright summer morning, when that building is resplendent in the glory of an Italian sun, as one looks down on that vast multitude of statues representing patriarchs, prophets, and saints of the Old Law; representing apostles and doctors, martyrs and confessors, holy virgins and pious women of the New Law; representing saints of every sex, age, condition, clime and century, it seems as if the architect had made all the sainted dead rise out of that square in the unsullied purity of their resurrection robes. And,

as one instinctively follows the statues as they rise one above the other, until his eyes rest on the highest pinnacle where Mary stands, the stars her diadem, the moon her footstool, the sun her robe of glory, Mary's canticle, the MAGNIFICAT comes to his mind. The prophecy, however, is now changed, it is no longer: All generations SHALL call me blessed, but, All generations HAVE called me blessed. As one catches the inspiration of the scene, as he stands there, in spirit, on resurrection day, in that tremendous hour when time shall cease and eternity begin, is it too much to say, that he hears the angels of God echoing back to the saints of earth that song of benediction which the Archangel Gabriel first intoned on earth?

Yet, great as is the splendor with which the fulfilment of this prophecy surrounds Mary, it is but the reflection of that glorious, tremendous Mystery of the Incarnation accomplished in her chaste womb, when the Holy Ghost came upon her, when the power of the Most High overshadowed her, when He that has shown might in His arm, did great things in her. As the moon receives all her light and beauty from the sun, so does Mary's testimony receive its brilliancy from her Son, the true Light, that enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world, Just as the moon enables men to contemplate

the beauties of the earth and the structure of the world when the shades of night would conceal them from view, so the light of Mary's prophecy enables men to behold the harmony and strength of the evidences that support Christianity, when the mists of doubt and the darkness of error would conceal them from view.

Look back at that poor handmaiden amid the hills of Judea, in the humble home of Elizabeth! Listen to her, nineteen hundred years ago, prophesying: "Behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." And ask: What was there to bring that prophecy to pass if there had been no Incarnation? Then, look to-day, at the magnificence of its fulfilment; and tell me what sign is like unto this? So simple, so striking, so strong,—who can be so reckless as to deny the existence of this sign? who so ignorant as not to understand its meaning? who so ingenious as to cast doubt on it? who so exacting as to question its sufficiency?

Is it any wonder, that those who find themselves lost in the mazes and depths of arguments about miracles, who find the enemies of Christianity casting suspicion on its evidences, (just as the counterfeiter makes people doubtful of genuine coin), should find in Mary's prophecy testimony that cannot be simulated, an unquestionable,

unanswerable argument? Is it any wonder, that those who, in the Babel of scientific discussions, have found themselves confused and hesitating as to the right, should hear the voice of God in that song of benediction wherein Mary's prophecy has been fulfilled? Is it any wonder, that the simple and weak ones who fear to enter the lists in argument with the enemies of their religion, should find in the fulfilment of this prophecy, a rampart of faith which the army of infidelity cannot scale,—should find in it that Tower of David on the walls of the Mystic Jerusalem, which the enemies of their salvation can neither conceal from them, close against them, nor drive them out of? Is it any wonder, then, that the Church of Jesus Christ should burst forth in that exultant anthem of victory: "Rejoice, O Virgin Mary! thou alone hast destroyed all heresies in the whole world?"—*Regina Prophetarum, ora pro nobis!*

The Spiritual Motherhood of Mary.

OUR LADY OF MERCY.

A SERMON

DELIVERED AT THE BLESSING OF THE BASEMENT OF THE CHURCH OF OUR LADY OF MERCY, PHILADELPHIA, SUNDAY, JANUARY 18, 1891.

1 And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there.
2 And Jesus also was invited and his disciples to the marriage.
3 And the wine failing, the mother of Jesus saith to Him: They have no wine.
4 And Jesus saith to her: Woman, what is it to me and to thee? My hour is not yet come.
5 His mother saith to the waiters: Whatsoever he shall say to you, do ye.
6 Now there were set there six water-pots of stone, according to the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three measures apiece.
7 Jesus saith to them: Fill the water-pots with water. And they filled them up to the brim.
8 And Jesus saith to them: Draw out now, and carry to the chief steward of the feast. And they carried it.
9 And when the chief steward had tasted the water made wine, and knew not whence it was, but the waiters knew who had drawn the water; the chief steward calleth the bridegroom.
10 And saith to him: Every man at first setteth forth good wine, and when men have well drank then that which is worse, but thou hast kept the good wine until now.
11 This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee; and he manifested his glory; and his disciples believed in him.—*St. John, ii, 1-11.*

YOUR GRACE, REVEREND FATHERS, BELOVED BRETHREN:—It is rarely, if ever, that the Gospel of the day furnishes an appropriate text for a

discourse on an extraordinary occasion like the dedication of a church. To-day's Gospel, however, not only furnishes the text for the occasion, but is the only one of all the Sundays of the year that has any bearing on the devotion which the name of this church suggests.

When it is known that your worthy pastor had fixed on earlier dates for the opening of the church, and that circumstances which even his energy could not overcome, made to-day the earliest date for this ceremony, it must appear like a remarkable coincidence that this church, the only one in the Diocese dedicated to GOD in honor of OUR LADY OF MERCY, should be blessed and opened for divine service on this Sunday, the Gospel of which furnishes a stronger proof of Mary's right to the title, OUR LADY OF MERCY, than any other portion of Sacred Scripture. Indeed, this coincidence is auspicious of the provision Mary will make for the spiritual welfare of all, who in worshipping GOD here, will honor her under a title which it was little less than an inspiration to have given to this church, OUR LADY OF MERCY.

Of all the titles of our Blessed Lady, the one that excites in Catholics the most ardent devotion, that stirs up in them the most tender and grateful recollections, that inspires in them during life and

at the hour of death, the sublimest confidence in Mary's protection, is that of LADY OF MERCY.

On the other hand, there is no title of the Blessed Virgin which Protestants so strenuously object to, so vehemently deny to Mary, as that of LADY OF MERCY. They concede to Mary a sweet, wise, holy Motherhood of JESUS; but they deny her spiritual motherhood of the redeemed, who, begotten through the Gospel unto GOD, have, in holy baptism, become the brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ. The best disposed among them admit Mary to be the highest type of womanhood; and, therefore, permit her to be honored and imitated as a model of virtue, while with one voice they cry out that it is wrong to invoke Mary as a mediatrix. They acknowledge the saving helpfulness of Mary's example in our regard, but they deny the power of her intercession.

Nay, more, Protestants contend that to invoke Mary's assistance is the greatest impiety to Jesus; that it not only ignores Him whose solicitude and compassion exceed those of all His creatures, and who has given all who labor and are heavy-laden the most tender and pressing invitation to come to Him for aid, but that this very appeal to Mary implies that she is more compassionate than Jesus. They contend, that Jesus now will have no one stand between Him and the souls He yearns after,

any more than of old He permitted disciples to stand between Him and the children He would bless; that nowhere does He tell any soul to go in its necessities to saint or Blessed Virgin, since His invitation is, that all shall come directly to Him. They declare it to be the extravagant, unwarranted devotion of Catholics to Mary under the title of OUR LADY OF MERCY, that has driven some Protestants to the other extreme of belittling the Mother of Jesus.

Moreover, Protestants, while admitting the clearness and strength of those portions of Scriptures which speak of Mary's virtues and dignities, claim that those adduced by Catholics to prove Mary a mediatrix between Christ and the redeemed, are obscure, difficult to understand, weak; that the Catholic interpretation of them is, at best, doubtful; nay, that Protestants understand the Gospel of this Sunday in such a way as to make Jesus refuse, rebuke, reject His Mother for attempting to act as mediatrix at the Marriage Feast of Cana.

It must be admitted, that portions of the Gospel of to-day, for the moment, grate harshly on the Catholic ear; that they sound like a refusal, a rebuke of Mary; that they seem perilously like a rejection of her. It must be admitted, too, that all attempts to soften these expressions, have

proved failures; and that the Protestant rendering, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" is more literal than the Catholic version, "Woman, what is it to Me and to thee?"

To-day, no effort will be made to tone down the harshness of Jesus' words to His Mother, to make light of, or to explain away, the difficulties that confront those who make known the true meaning of this Gospel. On the contrary, our dissenting brethren will be allowed to make much of these difficulties, to make mountains of them, as it were; and after they have piled them as mountains on top of one another, they will be told they have not yet provided a pedestal high enough on which to place the figure of OUR LADY OF MERCY, so great, indeed, are the proportions which these difficulties, when the proper lesson is drawn from them, make Mary assume in the plan of redemption. And it is no more paradoxical to say —despite of what Protestants have adduced to the contrary—that these seeming difficulties will become the strongest evidences of the power of her intercession with Christ, than it is to say that denials are oftentimes the most efficacious means of propagating the truth.

Some one has said: "Many truths are not appreciated because they have never been denied." To be let severely alone, to be treated with silent

contempt, is the worst fate that ever befel a man or a truth. Denial saves truths from oblivion, excites interest in them, leads men to study them, brings champions to defend them, and thus makes them more widely known and better understood. As a man, conscious of the sterling quality of his gold, says to those who question its purity: Test it, apply your acids, put it in the fire,—so Christ permitted the Pharisees and Scribes to deny, to question the reality of His miracles, to attribute them to Beelzebub. He did not permit them to do this that His miracles might be thus discredited as evidences of His doctrine and divinity, but that their sufficiency might thus be established for all time. No one might doubt what had stood all the tests to which the most intelligent, incredulous, and malevolent of Christ's enemies had seen fit to subject them. In one of the lessons of the Breviary, St. Gregory the Great says: "The slowness of the disciples to believe, was not so much their weakness as our strength. In consequence of their doubts, the Resurrection was demonstrated by infallible proofs. These proofs we read and acknowledge. I, therefore, put my confidence in Thomas, who doubted long, much more than in Magdalen, who believed at once. Through doubting, Thomas actually came to touch the Wounds, and thereby closed up any

wound of doubt in our hearts."

What is true of denials and doubts is also true of the difficulties in which certain portions of Scripture are involved. Difficulties, doubts, denials serve for truth the purpose polishing does for the diamond. As polishing lets in the light which the diamond refracts and reflects in a thousand brilliant scintillations, so, of difficulties is born that spirit of investigation and discussion which reveals the importance of truths so strikingly, that all must recognize their true meaning, and none can remain in ignorance of their worth. As nature, for the most part, has hidden her gold, her silver, and her precious gems, down deep in the earth and in the sea, in order that the difficulty and danger, met with in procuring them, may make them the more esteemed, so Christ seems to have locked up the most precious treasures of His truth in obscure passages and parables, in order that men might be stimulated to seek them amid difficulties, and thus to prize them the more highly when secured. Christ did not cast pearls before swine; rather, He hid them where only the intelligent and painstaking seekers, who would appreciate them, could find them.

Although Christ was infinite in knowledge, He, nevertheless, found it necessary, in teaching

men, to deal with them as a man with men. Hence, He often stopped short in His teachings; He purposely left His meanings obscure, in order to fix the attention of His hearers, excite their curiosity, lead them to ask for further explanation, —to the end that His teachings might prove the more efficacious.

With the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, He feigned to pass their homes in order that they might have the merit of constraining Him to remain, and that He might reward their hospitality by manifesting Himself to them in the breaking of bread. He often feigned a refusal, when He intended thereby to elicit a manifestation of virtue that would compel Him to grant not only all the petitioner had asked, but infinitely more. His seeming refusal to grant a temporal favor, often evoked in the petitioner that understanding, that faith, which compelled Our Lord to bestow upon him the spiritual blessing, of which the coveted temporal favor was but the type. Thus, the divine miracle operated on the soul of the afflicted one what it relieved or cured in his body.

Christ was infinite in power, yet He was pleased to make use of many ceremonies in working some of His miracles, just as if the simple act of His will were not sufficient. In curing the deaf and dumb man, for example, Christ led

him aside from the multitude, put His fingers into his ears as if to bore through the obstruction to the sense of hearing, looked up to Heaven as if for aid, and groaning, said "*Ephphetha*," before the ears of the man were opened, and his tongue loosed. Christ did not have recourse to these ceremonies, this mute appeal to Heaven for help, this groaning and seeming labor in the work, because of any difficulty He found in the performance of the miracle, but only to aid us to understand its spiritual significance; to impress upon men the difficulty Omnipotence itself meets with in opening the ears, and in loosening the tongues, of those whom sin has made spiritually deaf and dumb; the difficulty in making the deaf heart hear, the dumb soul speak. An important point to note is this: These refusals, these ceremonies, were not intended to manifest or reflect upon the spiritual condition of those passing immediately under our Lord's hand, for this would have been a betrayal of those who appealed to Him for cure; but they were intended to show the bystanders, and make clear to all men who should hear or read of these miracles, the condition of their own souls as typified in those individual miseries which Christ wrought miracles to relieve, and to show men that Christ wrought no miracle in favor of afflicted humanity

unless He hoped, through it, to reach the souls of men.

From what has been said, it follows: First, that Christ was not led to do anything by accident, or contrary to His primal intention; that whatever He said or did, He had intended to say or do from the beginning; consequently, that whatsoever represents Him as changing His mind, or manifesting indecision, is for our instruction. From the beginnning, therefore, it was His purpose to change water into wine at the marriage in Cana, and to do this at Mary's request. Second, that Christ's acts are as full of significance, as instructive, as His words. St. Gregory the Great says: "Our Lord and Saviour does sometimes admonish us by words, and sometimes, by WORKS. Yea, His very works TEACH us; for that which He doeth silently, His example moveth us to copy." Alban Butler says: "The manger of Bethlehem was Christ's first pulpit. His life in the stable was His first sermon." Hence, in regard to Christ, whenever refusals precede the granting of a request, or certain ceremonies attend the working of a miracle, we are to look for instruction too profound, too important for words, however direct and strong, to convey.

Assuming, for the sake of argument, the truth of what our Protestant brethren say of the

circumstances surrounding the miracle of Cana,—since those circumstances are the words and acts of a God-man, it behooves Christians to inquire diligently into them; to weigh well the signification of the divine rebukes and refusals, with their attendant doubts and difficulties. Why this rebuke (in the Protestant version): "Woman, what have I to do with thee?"? Why this refusal: "My hour has not yet come"? Why, then, the palpable contradiction of both rebuke and refusal in the immediate working of this mighty miracle at Mary's instance? Why the opening of His ministry before the time appointed? Why the manifestation of His glory, as it were, under a bushel, at an obscure nuptial board? Why all these at Mary's request?

The question arises: "Did the Son of the living God deem all these perplexing circumstances necessary or appropriate concomitants of a miracle, if its sole, exclusive purpose were to supply a few gallons of wine to a poverty-stricken wedding party, in order to enable them to keep up the good cheer? Can any reasonable person suppose that such was the object of a miracle shrouded in such mystery? When such thought presented itself, has there not been down deep in the mind of the questioner, a lurking suspicion that such a purpose would be too trivial, too

frivolous for the Saviour of the World to entertain? That it would be unworthy of the exercise of Christ's power, incongruous to the manifestation of His glory? That if the Mighty God had no higher object, no more blessed purpose than this, in changing a few measures of water into wine, then there would have been no meaning in all the attendant circumstances of the miracle?

Such a conception not only belittles Christ's intelligence, degrades the exercise of His power, borders on the blasphemous, but also despoils this miracle of the significance and grace it should have for us.

Hence, we must seek in these circumstances, an object worthy of the Son of God, worthy of One infinite in intelligence and in power. Look, then, thoughtfully, at the obscurity, the difficulties, and the doubts, surrounding this miracle, and do they not at once appear as the shadings, and deep, dark lines, intended to fix the attention of men for all time to come upon MARY as the central figure of the picture? Read the narrative of this miracle, and is not this the sentence which at once arrests attention, because of its prominence and emphasis: "AND THE MOTHER OF JESUS WAS THERE"? Mary was there, the Gospel tells us,—she was there not as an idle spectator, a mere guest, but as the ruling spirit of the occasion,

suggesting to Jesus, and directing the waiters. Whatever lesson, then, these circumstances teach, must be concerning Mary.

Indeed, there can be no doubt, that the great object of this miracle was to bring into marked prominence the Spiritual Motherhood of Mary; that "Jesus disowned His Mother," yes, according to the flesh, that He might the more impressively introduce her as our mother according to the order of grace; that the object of all these circumstances was to exhibit in a manner more striking than words could express, the characteristics of Mary in her spiritual motherhood of the redeemed.

Who will question Mary's fitness for this office?

Had not the Eternal Father made His only begotten Son obey and honor Mary for thirty years, because He foresaw that Mary's every thought, word and act would be in such strict conformity with the Divine Will, that the Incarnate Wisdom, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, might be made subject to her? What fear, then, could Our Heavenly Father have had to subject His wayward, oftentimes wicked, children to the maternal guidance of Mary? He well knew that all her influence would be exerted to make her spiritual children worthy of the fellowship of her Son. He foresaw, in all that concerns the salva-

tion of men, that the pure heart of Our Lady of Mercy would ever throb in unison with the Sacred Heart of Jesus; and that Mary would ever say to her spiritual children as she said to the waiters: "WHATSOEVER HE SHALL SAY TO YOU, DO YE."

If God Himself could find no higher type with which to compare His own undying solicitude for souls, than a mother's love, saying: "If the mother should forget the child of her womb, I shall not forget thee;" and if this love of an earthly mother, still encompassed with the frailties of the flesh, distracted with a thousand cares, divided by conflicting interests and affections, is the nearest approach to His divine interest in souls, what idea does He not give us, in this, of Mary's solicitude for the souls committed to her care; of the intense devotedness of her maternal heart, freed as it always was from human dross, strengthened, enlightened, inflamed, as it now is, with love of GOD and of immortal souls alone? In the following words, St. Bernard gives the reason for Mary's interest in souls. He says: "As the hand that has long held some fragrant fruit or flower retains the sweet odor thereof all the day long, so surely must Mary have been penetrated through and through with kindness and mercy, in whose womb Love and Mercy

itself reposed for nine months; and the more so, since that Love had dwelt in her heart before it lay in her womb; and that when it left her womb, to be born into the world, it did not forsake her soul." What, then, but love and mercy, could we expect from her who is the Mother of Mercy?

Behold this solicitude at the marriage in Cana! Mary, with a woman's quickness of perception, is the first to notice "the wine failing;" with a woman's tenderness, she feels for the embarassment of the needy pair; with a woman's tact, she meets the emergency, saying, privately, to her Son: "They have no wine;" and, with a mother's devotion, in spite of insuperable obstacles, she perseveres until her mediation is crowned with success.

A mother's heart will brave any difficulty in succoring her child. Obstacles before which others quail, only stimulate a mother's zeal. Yet, even mothers have hesitated to go before the great ones of the earth, to ask, in behalf of their children, something never before granted; and what mother, after being refused the unheard-of favor, after being rebuked for asking it, would still urge an earthly potentate to grant it?

At Cana, Mary's conduct shows how fully she realized the character and power of her Son.

No one in Scripture has given a fuller, a clearer idea of the omnipotence of Christ, than Mary gives in her command to the waiters: "WHATSOEVER He shall say to you, do ye." Her zeal in behalf of the married couple leads her to approach Jesus as the Son of God, to ask Him to work a miracle in their behalf,—His first miracle, and such a miracle! She asks Him to effect in an instant, what the Creator of the Universe by His power effects only after years; to change by His word water into wine, a transmutation which the Creator gradually accomplishes, and only through the combined agency of the vine, the soil, the air, the sun, the dews of heaven, and the labor of man. Mary's zeal is rebuked: "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" Her request is refused: "My hour is not yet come." Who, after being refused, rebuked, and rejected by the Lord Himself, would entertain hope of success? Who would have persevered after Truth Himself had said: "My hour is not yet come"—for working miracles? Certainly none but that Spiritual Mother, who is insensible to all things, except the spiritual necessities of her children. Mary's further solicitude, however, is marked alike with utmost deference to the divine majesty of her Son, and with unabated devotion to her clients:—"Whatsoever He shall

say to you, do ye." Was there ever solicitude like unto this!

Do those who would have us believe that Jesus refused, rebuked, rejected His Mother for saying "They have no wine," realize what an idea they thus unwittingly give us of Mary's power? They show us, that her request was complied with, notwithstanding her Son publicly refused, rebuked, rejected her for making it. Measure, if you can, the power of an influence which prevails over Christ's refusal, rebuke, rejection of her that exerted it! Think of the power of an influence that not only prevails over a refusal, but hastens Christ's hour for working miracles! And why does Mary's influence prevail? Is it because she repeats her gentle hint: "They have no wine"? Is it because she makes a stronger, more explicit request? Becomes urgent, importunate? Plays upon the human feelings of her Son? Not at all; for Mary never reverted to her first request, but simply said to the waiters after the refusal: "Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye." Her influence prevailed, to show that the mere hint of the Merciful Mother is sufficient to overcome what seems to be the insuperable objection of her Divine Son to work a miracle, yea, even His first miracle.

In the world, how carefully do men select the

times, place, and people most favorable for the introduction of their first effort, because the success or failure of their life-work depends largely upon the circumstances attending its opening. Why, then, on this occasion, did Christ disregard the human means by which the success of His Kingdom could have been promoted? Why did He perform His first miracle, open His ministry, manifest His glory, in the privacy of a home, rather than publicly in the Temple? Why, in obscure Cana, rather than in the world-famed Jerusalem? Why, before a wedding party, rather than before the representatives of all nations assembled in the Holy City? Surely a thing so strange to our mode of thinking, so foreign to our mode of acting, must, when done by Infinite Wisdom, be intended to arrest our attention, to make a deep and lasting impression. Why, then, is this? Simply to show the power of Mary's influence with her Son, to show that Mary cannot fail to obtain from Him any blessing her children stand in need of, since under such, humanly speaking, adverse circumstances, her simple hint induced Him to work His first miracle. What an idea, then, does Jesus Himself give us of the power of Mary's influence with Him when, at her bare suggestion, He opens His ministry, works His first miracle, manifests His glory BEFORE His

hour had come, thus subordinating, as it were, for our instruction, His own wishes and the will of His Father to a compliance with Mary's intimation: "They have no wine"! Have you weighed the significance of this? Have you realized the thoughts thus expressed by acts? For words have not the power to convey an adequate idea of them.

Why does the Gospel make Mary's mediation with Jesus at the marriage-feast appear to bend Him to comply with the hint: "They have no wine," regardless of all the circumstances which seem to forbid the exercise of His power? Why, before Jesus had preached His Gospel, called His Apostles, laid the foundation of His Church, before He had by a miracle given evidence of His divinity and of the truth of His doctrine, does Mary's influence constrain Jesus to work His first miracle in favor of a newly-wedded couple, to manifest His glory in their obscure home? Why?

To show that Our Lady of Mercy is not only solicitous and powerful, but also that she is singularly wise above all the children of men.

The world has never tired of repeating the answer, of extolling, as above that of statesmen and philosophers, the wisdom of the woman who, to Napoleon's question: "What does France

most need to make her permanently great?" replied, "MOTHERS." Mary then asked for this miracle of Cana, to show her idea of the importance of matrimony; to show how much, in her opinion, depends upon the home; to show, that without the sanctified home, the Gospel is preached in vain, miracles are wrought in vain, the Church is established in vain; to show that the great work of Redemption must begin at the beginning, at the fountain of life, at the home.

Against all human foresight, Mary insisted, if you will, that Christ's first miracle should be wrought at the celebration of marriage, because in her wisdom, she saw a plain thing, which is often overlooked by the worldly-wise; she well recognized the simple truth that, as the stream cannot rise higher than its fountain, the river can be nowhere purer than at its source, so neither human society nor the Church of Christ itself can rise higher than the morality of the homes which constitute one and the other. You may take precious metal and base metal, refine, temper, work them into useful and beautiful shapes; you may polish the one, gild the other, until they appear alike; you may devote them to the same honorable service; and after all, there is nothing more in them than was in the ores when taken out of the mines; the

precious remains precious; the base, base. You may take a boy from a good home, and another from a bad one; you may feed, educate, develop, culture them alike, until, in the eyes of the world, they are equally intelligent, polished, honorable; and, after all, the discerning eye will perceive they have nothing more in them than the development of what they received from their homes. They may both become princes or presidents, priests or prelates; and, so far as the instincts and principles of morality are concerned, so far as the motives that influence them, and the objects they strive to attain, are concerned, the one may be likened to the product of a fair garden, the other to the product of a foul dunghill.

The Angel said of Jesus: "And He shall save His people from their sins." Mary had looked at the world bloated with licentiousness. She knew there never would have been a deluge of water if there had not been a deluge of sin. She saw that the flood-gates of iniquity had burst wide open when the indissoluble bond of matrimony was discarded. Therefore, at Mary's instance, "Jesus also was invited, and His disciples to the marriage;" in order, that His pres- would restore to its pristine strength that tie by which God in Paradise had made husband and wife no longer two, but two in one flesh, had so

joined them that man should not, could not, put them asunder; in order, that as His going down into the Jordan had made the waters of Baptism a laver of regeneration in the word of life, so His presence at this marriage should effect that what was heretofore only a bare but binding contract, should now bind, and also bring grace to all worthily entering into it, and thus raise the marriage contract to the dignity of a Sacrament, so great in the Church and in Christ, that our Divine Lord made it the symbol of His own union with His Spouse, the Church.

As the miracle by which Jesus multiplied the loaves to feed the famishing thousands in the wilderness was wrought not so much to appease their hunger as to afford Him a favorable opportunity to direct their thoughts to that Bread from Heaven that was to nourish their souls, the Blessed Eucharist; so this miracle, by which water was changed into wine, was wrought not so much to supply the needs of a banquet, as to direct men's thoughts to a new, holy, enduring joy that, through this miracle, Christ brought to matrimony.

For those who think Christ wrought this miracle to supply that wine which, at best, is but the symbol of the happiness of worldly homes, of the joy of children according to the flesh, there

is Christ's refusal! For those who think this miracle was wrought to supply that wine wherein there is often rioting and drunkenness, chambering and impurity, there is Christ's rebuke! For those who distort this miracle into a sanction of their intemperance, there is Christ's rejection! They know not of what spirit they are!

But for Mary, there is neither refusal, nor rebuke, nor rejection! For her, Christ at once, notwithstanding the seeming dissuasion of most extraordinary circumstances, works a stupendous miracle. And why? Because Mary seeks through that very miracle to change voluptuous affections and carnal pleasures into chaste love and spiritual delights, to change children into saints, to make home the preparation for heaven, to change water into the wine that produces virgins. Because Mary wishes all our joys to be symbolized by that wine that flows from Jesus Christ, who for us is, indeed, THE VINE, giving forth the wine which the just shall drink forever in the Kingdom of God!

As we behold Mary presiding at this marriage feast, the words of the Book of Wisdom come unbidden to our lips:

"She reacheth from end to end mightily, and ordereth all things sweetly.

"She glorifieth her children by being conver-

sant with God.

"For it is she, that is the teacher of the knowledge of God, and the chooser of His works."

If our Protestant brethren, then, can find no plain, explicit words to prove the spiritual motherhood of Mary, they can find at least a mighty work to prove it, they can find Christ's first miracle. They must confess the fact, that this miracle was wrought through Mary's mediation, to prove her spiritual motherhood of the redeemed. It is never lawful to argue against facts, for facts never lie, FACTS ARE NEVER WRONG.

Now, it will be in harmony with all the perplexing circumstances, all the attendant paradoxes of this miracle, if the word that at first shocks us most, the word which best serves the purpose of our opponents in showing that Jesus actually disowned His mother at the marriage in Cana, should prove, when properly understood, so plain, so explicit, so strong an evidence of Mary's spiritual motherhood, that Catholics can well afford to rest their contention on this word alone.

When Mary said to Jesus, "they have no wine," non-Catholics will have us believe that her Son became so impatient of her attempted direction, her interference with His omnipotence, that He could not treat her with the ordinary respect due a mother from a Son. He addresses her (they

urge), not with any endearing title breathing love and honor, but harshly, rebuking, and rejecting her says: "Woman"—not mother—"what have I to do with thee?"

As, at times, the orator must discard his loudest tones and use the faintest whisper to give expression to the strongest feeling, to the most intense passion, to the most momentous truths, so, at times, must all formal titles be discarded, and the homeliest terms used to designate persons whose position, office, transcends the power of all earthly dignities to ennoble, while it confers honor upon, the lowliest name. The author of Hamlet understood this, for when he designates him who was supposed to combine in himself all the graces of gods and men, he does not call him a gentleman, a prince or a a king, but A MAN

> A combination, and a form, indeed,
> Where every god did set his seal,
> To give the world assurance of a man.

Christ used the word "woman", they tell us, instead of the word "mother." Must there not, then, be a deep mysterious reason for this? Had Christ on this occassion used the word "mother," He would have excluded Mary's spiritual motherhood of all men, and restricted the meaning of the term to His own relationship to Mary. The word WOMAN is generic. No one speaks of the human race as decended from a mother, but as from a

woman; so Christ was compelled to use the word "woman" to indicate Mary's spiritual motherhood of the redeemed.

This meaning is made plain when Christ uses the same word on Calvary. In that awful hour, when no thought of impatience, of disrespect, can be imputed to Him, when He is solely preoccupied by the work of redemption, when there is no thought of flesh and blood, when He exists only for the salvation of souls, Jesus from the cross addresses Mary, saying: "Woman, behold thy son;" while to St. John, He says: "Son, behold thy mother." Here, John represents us; and Mary, in becoming a mother to him, becomes our mother also. Mary is given to John in the same sense that John is given to her,—in a spiritual sense. John needed no earthly mother, no mother in the temporal sense of the word, for his own mother was then living, and (St. Matthew tells us), present at the Crucifixion. Indeed, it would be a severe reflection on Jesus and John alike, to think that Our Lord in the supreme moment of the world's redemption, was busied about His mother's temporal welfare; and by a special injunction, implied that His relative and beloved disciple, St. John, might prove wanting in his devotion to Mary's temporal interests.

To put at rest every doubt concerning the

spiritual motherhood of Mary, let us go back to the moment of the fall, when God threatened Satan with complete overthrow, with crushing defeat, saying to the serpent: "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed, and she shall crush thy head." This woman was not Eve, but Mary; for Eve had already fallen a victim to the wiles of the serpent. She had become a slave of the devil, and the mother of sinners.

In this sentence passed upon Satan, it is predicted that an antagonism, active, aggressive, will exist between the Woman of Promise and the Prince of Darkness; that the influence of the one will war against the influence of the other, and that Mary will finally crush the serpent's head. It is also foretold, that the woman and the serpent shall each have adherents, seed; and that, between the children of the woman and the children of the serpent, there shall be waged irreconcilable enmities.

In this prophecy, the seed, the children spoken of, are not such as are born of the flesh, but such as are born of the spirit, such as are born of a good or of an evil influence. The children of Mary in the economy of grace, having God for their Father, are ever striving to follow her injunction: "Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye,"

and therefore, because they are born of God, they love Jesus Christ. The children of the serpent, on the other hand, because "full of guile and deceit, children of the devil, are the enemies of all justice, and never cease," as St. Paul said of Elymas, "to pervert the right ways of the Lord." St. John says: "He that committeth sin is of the devil." And again: "Whatsoever is born of God committeth no sin." "In this, the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil."

The seed of the woman, then, are those whom Mary's influence inclines to do good; the seed of the serpent are those whom the influence of Satan disposes to evil.

Thus, Mary is declared to be the spiritual mother of the just, as the wicked are said to be the children of their father, the devil. Her spiritual motherhood is made as conspicuous in this prophecy as is the other fact, that Satan is the spiritual head of the kingdom of evil.

As there was neither disrespect nor disowning of Mary by the Eternal Father in Paradise, nor by the Redeemer on Calvary, so neither was there at Cana, where Christ opened His ministry, manifested His glory, and inaugurated for Mary her spiritual motherhood of the children of God.

How cumulative, how consistent, is the force of this testimony—this evidence of the inception,

growth, and development of a divine purpose! The spiritual motherhood of Mary,—the one Immaculate WOMAN of the divine counsels—was foretold in Paradise—begun at Cana—and proclaimed on Calvary unto all generations.

The sun and the moon have not more certainly their places in the planetary system, than Jesus and Mary have in the scheme of Redemption. And, in the devotion of her spiritual children, Mary could no more usurp the place of Jesus, than the light of the moon could obscure the light of the sun.

It is as easy to explain why those who have never experienced the effects of Mary's loving solicitude, her power and wisdom in their regard, are surprised, offended, scandalized at the ardent, constant, demonstrative devotion of Catholics to Our Lady of Mercy, as it is to explain why the abandoned, cruelly-treated orphan, who has never been enfolded in a mother's loving embrace, has never been pressed against a mother's throbbing heart, has never felt her passionate kiss or witnessed her tears of joy, should stand in open-mouthed wonder at the demonstrative affection of mother and child, should gaze in amazement and horror at the want of propriety of mother and child as they are lost in mutual embrace.

Once the place of Mary in the plan of Redemp-

tion is known, once the characteristics of her spiritual motherhood, as portrayed in Holy Scripture, are understood, it is easy to explain why all true Christians from the earliest centuries down to this day, have exhibited the most fervid, childlike devotion to her. It is easy to understand the force of that saying, so often on the lips of the saints: "Devotion to Mary is a sign of predestination." It is easy to believe St. Bernard, when he says: "No one was ever lost who had recourse to Mary." It is easy to account for the reasonableness of the filial, sublime confidence of pious souls in her maternal protection; to see why, with one voice, in the words of St. Bonaventure, they should exclaim: "If devout to Mary during life, what shall I stand in need of to work out my salvation, since the Mother of God is my mother? What shall I fear at the hour of death, before the judgment seat, since the Mother of the Judge will then be the mother of the criminal, and my salvation shall depend upon a mother's prayer and a Brother's word!" *Mater Misericordiæ, ora pro nobis!*

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

A SERMON

DELIVERED IN THE CATHEDRAL OF SAINTS PETER AND PAUL, PHILADELPHIA, DECEMBER 8, 1874.

"I have not written to you as to such as know not the truth, but as to such as know it; and that no lie is from the truth."—*1 St. John, ii, 21.*

It is just twenty years to-day since our glorious Pontiff, Pius IX, defined the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary as a dogma of faith, a revealed truth contained in Holy Scripture; and decreed that anyone who should henceforth presume to question or deny it, would, by that very fact, exclude himself from the Ark out of which there is no salvation.

It is not the purpose of this discourse to treat of the singular dignity the Immaculate Conception conferred upon the ever-blessed Mother of Jesus, nor of the victories gained in Mary's sinless conception by God, and our race over the Serpent; but to explain the difficulties which beset the definition of this, or any other dogma of faith.

It is hard for the natural man to accept any religious truth; but that of the Immaculate Conception, especially to the non-Catholic mind, suggests difficulties having their origin in the circumstances preceding and attending its definition. The recent discussions of Papal infallibility alone, have shown Catholics how stubbornly the Protestant mind opposes itself to a decree defining a dogma of faith.

"How is it," non-Catholics ask us, "that the Immaculate Conception became a dogma of faith on the Eighth of December, 1854? Before that date," (they say,) "you might have questioned or denied it without any note of censure, without incurring the odium of heresy, or the danger of damnation; but after that day, because the Pope has spoken, you can deny it only at the peril of your immortal soul. If this doctrine had always been regarded in the Catholic Church as a revealed truth," (they ask,) "why was not its denial at all times looked upon as equally sinful? How did this decree of Pope Pius IX, effect that what, in the first place, you could have denied without sin, you may deny later only under penalty of eternal reprobation?"

Thus, we see, that to non-Catholics, generally, the definition of a doctrine is considered as being what an anti-Catholic writer has distinctly charged

it is, when he says: "Catholics are required to believe that the Pope has the right, is endowed with power by the Most High, to make doctrines that were never revealed by God or Jesus Christ; that not only truth and falsehood, but morality and immorality, depend on the Pope's setting his hand to a bit of parchment. A deed might be a crime or no crime at all, just as it suited the interest or caprice of the Old Man of Rome to say or not to say the word. If it suited him not to say the word, the doer of a certain deed would be burned alive in hell forever; if it suited him to say the word, the doer of the self-same deed would go, fortified by the Sacraments, to endless bliss. What rule of morals, what eternal law of right and wrong, of truth and falsehood, can remain in the hearts of men born and bred under the shadow of so hideous a deception?" In a word, it was assumed, that the definition of dogmas depended altogether upon the arbitrary caprice of the Pope. Of course, when this doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was defined, there was pity expressed for the benighted Catholics, who would be compelled to believe whatever absurd dogmas the whim of the Pope might see fit, in the future, to impose upon them; and many a zealous non-Catholic devoutly recalled the malediction of the APOCALYPSE: "If any

man shall ADD to these things, God shall add unto him the plagues written in this book."

The singular feature of the discussions usually attendant on the definition of a dogma of faith, is, that those who affect to ignore the authority of the Pope, who repudiate all his claims, who acknowledge no allegiance whatever to him, become very much exercised over his decrees, and very much alarmed lest Catholics should be led, through them, into error and intellectual slavery, while Catholics themselves appear totally indifferent to their impending danger.

If it be asked: Why do Catholics remain unmoved, while non-Catholics become so excited over the definition of this or any other dogma? Why do so very few of the many millions of Catholics raise their voice against what is styled "a hideous deception"?—we have the answer in this: Catholics believe, with St. Paul, that the Church is "the pillar and ground of truth"; they believe that Christ commands men to obey—TO HEAR the Church, under pain of being treated not only as the heathen, but as the publican—the apostate, who knew the ways of justice, and for the sake of lucre abandoned them. "He that will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican." Catholics, moreover, know that Christ could not command men to listen to a

teacher of error; that, if the Church could propose error to men,—in commanding them to hear the Church, Christ would, in effect, command His followers to receive falsehood as truth. Those driven about by "every wind of doctrine," who are ever examining and questioning the doctrinal deliverances of their fallible teachers, can never know the freedom from anxiety those enjoy, who listen to the Church, which the Holy Ghost enables to teach ALL TRUTH. Hence, although Catholics may not fully understand, or be able to explain just what the Church, in a given instance, defines, they have Christ's word for believing that His Divine Spouse can not propose error to them. Since they know that she will teach only truth, they are ever ready to believe all she teaches.

Catholics thoroughly understand, that the office of the Church is not to create new doctrines, but to guard and preserve, unimpaired, the truth God has committed to her; they know, that there has been no revelation since Christ, that, consequently, if the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception had not been a truth explicitly or implicitly contained in the word of God as it stood revealed in the first age of Christianity, it could not have been defined as a dogma of the Church in the Nineteenth Century. In a word,

Catholics know, that the Church's office, in defining dogmas of faith, is simply to render authoritative decisions as to the true sense or meaning of God's revelations to men. To render them in such clear and explicit language as will sweep away all human difficulties, and condemn all human errors concerning the truth.

No power can add to the primal number of revealed truths, but our knowledge of those truths may be daily increased.

There is what is called DOCTRINAL DEVELOPMENT, by which revealed truths are not only unmistakably stated, arranged, and named, but by which doctrines necessarily implied in other revealed truths, are clearly and authoritatively deduced from them. Truth develops into dogma, not as the acorn develops into the oak, for it existed in all its fulness when first revealed, although it may not then have been as well-known or understood by men as now; rather, it develops as the pearl freed from its prison-shell, or as gold and gems taken from the mine, or as the Ten Commandments are developed from the two on which depend all the law and the prophets.

A diamond, found and cast aside by an ignorant lout, does not cease to be a gem, because, in his eyes, it appears but a bit of rough, unpolished stone. So, truth does not cease to be truth,

because the carnal man fails to apprehend it as such, fails to separate it from the irrevelant matter or error which obscures it. Holy Scripture is a mine of inexhaustible treasures, and it is only the discerning eye of the Church, that can discover its gold and gems; her cunning hand alone, that can separate them from the dross of human misconceptions and ignorance. As the miner does not create the gold which his industry brings to the surface, and frees from the ore,—so neither does the Church create the doctrines that, from time to time, she is called upon to define, thus bringing them to the knowledge of men, free from any admixture of error.

As fire removes all impurities from the ores of the precious metals, and as cutting and polishing reveal the beauty and value of the diamond, so the definitions of the Church, clearly and unmistakably, cut away misconceptions of the truth, purge it from the dross of error, and present it to the eyes of men, so effulgent with its own celestial light, that none may mistake it or reject it. Moreover, the Church, in defining and in giving names to dogmas, no more adds to the truth, than the astronomer adds to the number of the stars, when he daily discovers and gives names to planets that have been revolving in space, unknown and unrecognized by mankind,

from the dawn of creation. Hence, Catholics so calmly accepted the definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, well-knowing, that they were not called upon to add to or change their faith in a doctrine which they had all explicitly or implicitly believed before it was defined, or which some had opposed, only because they had misunderstood it.

The following quotation from the Apostolic Letter of Pope Pius IX, in proclaiming the definition, bears out what has thus far been said: "The Church of Christ, the careful guardian and asserter of the doctrines deposited in her keeping, changes nothing in them at any time, diminishes nothing, adds nothing; but with all industry, by faithfully and wisely treating ancient things delivered down from antiquity, and spread abroad by the faith of the Fathers, she studies to so eliminate and burnish them, that those ancient dogmas of celestial doctrine may receive evidence, light, distinctness, whilst they retain their fulness, integrity, propriety, and may grow only in their own kind, that is, in the same doctrines, the same sense, and the same belief."

If this doctrine was always believed, (it may be asked): why was it defined? Or why should its denial be threatened with anathema?

As disputes will arise among citizens of the

most approved loyalty, as to the interpretation of the civil law, as to its application in certain cases, and as to the apparent conflict of one law with another,—so, among Catholics of unswerving fidelity to the truth, controversies may arise as to the precise meaning and limitation of doctrines, their relation to certain individuals, and their reconciliation with certain well-defined and universally-accepted truths with which they seem to be in conflict. As in the first instance, a judicial decision from the highest legal tribunal is necessary, to settle honest differences of opinion as to the meaning and bearing of the civil law, and to prevent their recurrence, so, in the second case, a solemn, dogmatic definition is required to decide theological controversy, and prevent it from being re-opened.

While all Catholics believed in the sinlessness of Mary, of whom, in the words of St. Augustine, they would "have no mention whatever where sin was concerned", yet a Papal definition was necessary to decide what was meant by the Immaculate Conception of Mary, to show its relation to the Redemption, and to reconcile it with the consequences of the Fall,—with the doctrine of Original Sin. Strange to say, the very controversy which ultimately called forth the definition of this dogma, grew out of devotion

to Our Lady, under the title of the Immaculate Conception.

Before the twelfth century, the Holy See had granted to certain churches in France, the privilege of solemnly celebrating the feast of the Immaculate Conception. Lyons, then a Metropolitan See, not wishing to be behind her sister churches in honoring Mary, resolved to celebrate the feast of the Immaculate Conception as a solemn festival of obligation. The Chapter carried out this resolution, without having taken the precaution to secure the sanction of the Holy See. For this breach of ecclesiastical discipline, they were severely reprimanded by St. Bernard; and from it, a controversy arose, which lasted until the end of the twelfth century. Up to this time, those who declared against the institution, by private authority, of the feast, never opposed the pious belief in Mary's sinlessness. The dispute, however, soon passed from a question of discipline, to the consideration of the dogma itself. The Church had not yet spoken on the subject; the doctrine, as it is now formulated, had not been written, and although, with but few exceptions, all held that MARY WAS ALWAYS STAINLESS, two Schools arose in the Church, the one disputing and denying what the other put forth as the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception.

A controversy thus sprung up, not only about the pious belief itself, but as to how (in its then accepted sense,) it could be reconciled with certain portions of Holy Scripture.

Here, non-Catholics may ask the question: If the Catholic Church is the heaven-appointed guardian of truth, was she not derelict in permitting this controversy to be carried on for centuries, and thereby allow this revealed truth to be misunderstood, questioned, or denied? Why did she not IMMEDIATELY define the dogma, forbid its denial, and thus make known the truth, and save men from the sin of heresy?

One word will suffice for a reply—a word which became familiar to all through the deliberations of the Vatican Council,—it was INOPPORTUNE. It would have been inopportune for the Church to define the dogma while men were investigating it. Such a definition would have given color to the very charge of her enemies, that the Church is an arbitrary tyrant, that she imposes upon her children doctrines which they do not understand, and which they are reluctant to accept.

As has been already hinted, a Christian may call in question a truth, without being a heretic, just as a citizen may, under certain circumstances, resist the application of a law, without being a

traitor. A heretic is one, who after being admonished of his errors, persists in them. The Church saw, that the disputants in this controversy were all sincere seekers after truth and staunch defenders of Mary's honor; that they did not propose to assail any defined truth, or to propagate knowingly any heresy, that each school was strenuously endeavoring to maintain its own position, and was simply anxious to refute what it conceived to be the erroneous teaching of the other side. The Church knew how wedded men become to their opinions; how little interference, pride of intellect will brook, and that well-intentioned men are often led into formal heresy, by a rash attempt to expose and condemn their mistakes. The Church had learned from experience, that it is not only imprudent, but disastrous, to peremptorily silence those, who, with the best of intentions, unknowingly espouse the cause of error; that prudence dictates delay, when the feelings of men are aroused. Edmund Burke says: "Those who would lead, must sometimes seem to follow;" and the poet says:

> "Virtue of vice must pardon sometimes beg,
> For leave to do her good."

Non-Catholics may call this worldly prudence, and say that, as such, its dictates should not be followed when God's truth is in question. Christ,

however, counseled His disciples to make use of just such prudence: "Be ye wise as serpents, and gentle as doves." He made use of it Himself, when He charged His three Apostles, on coming down from the Mountain of Transfiguration: "Tell the vision to no man, till the Son of Man be risen from the dead." Why not publish it then? Was it not true, that His face shone as the sun, and His garments became white as snow? Yes, but that was not the time for making it known; it was then INOPPORTUNE. Calvary was to follow Thabor, and men would not know how to reconcile the glory of the latter with the ignominy of the former; hence, it was necessary to wait until the glory of the Resurrection had made it easy for men to believe in the splendors of the Transfiguration. The Apostles were careful not to alienate their proselytes by rash attempts to disabuse them of their mistaken ideas and prejudices. They not only went so far as to allow their converts to believe and practice what was not then of faith and of obligation, but they feigned an acquiesence in certain traditions and observances to which their neophytes clung. The Acts tell us, that St. Peter permitted Circumcision, on account of the reverence and attachment of the Jews for this rite, which had been supplanted by Baptism; that St. Paul circumcised Timothy, "on

account of the Jews who were in those parts." St. Paul said to the Corinthians: "I gave you milk to drink, not meat, for you were not able as yet." And again, the same Apostle said, that he became "all things to all men, that he might gain all to Christ." So, too, the Catholic Church, endowed with that wisdom which is from above, enlightened by the experience of ages, permitted this long-continued controversy among her children, because she knew it would ultimately lead to the knowledge and the vindication of the truth.

We would be the victims of egregious error if, from what has been said, we should conclude that the Church failed to define this doctrine during its protracted and hotly-contested discussion, because she herself was in doubt, not knowing what to assert, or what to condemn; that, like a wily politician, she was only biding her time, to see what School would emerge the stronger from the contest, in order that she might know with which it was the safer to cast her lot. No, no! the Church was never in doubt. Her "trumpet never gave forth an uncertain sound." The Church always held the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and excited in the hearts of the faithful a tender devotion to the Mother of God under this very title, by granting Masses and Offices in honor of this truth. The

Church forbade the controversy when it threatened to deny the pious belief. Although, after the prohibition, the dispute opened out afresh in various ways, such as, for example, when these questions were raised: "Did St. Bernard deny the Immaculate Conception?" or "Did St. Thomas teach it, or oppose it?"—the Church always prudently, but clearly, indicated what was her mind on the question.

All through this vexed discussion, the Church acted as a certain very wise and learned professor was wont to bear himself towards his students, when they got into a wrangle over a theological question, and appealed to him to act as judge. On such occasions, he expressed no opinion as to the merits of the dispute. He refrained from giving any decision. Not because there were two sides to the question, not because he himself was in doubt as to the truth, but because he plainly saw that decisive words could not be spoken without doing harm, either directly or indirectly, to all the parties concerned. He knew a decision from him would elate some and humiliate others. Often-times, the question was not brought properly before him, and a decision was impossible because the conflict arose from mutual misunderstandings, or from the utter ignorance of both parties as to the subject in dispute. When the question was brought squarely before

him, he knew that a direct decision would put a stop to all further study of the matter on the part of the students, the very thing he knew its continued agitation was calculated to promote. Appearing to hesitate, when appealed to, he would say: "Let us see! Has not So-and-So," (naming some celebrated theologian), "got something to say on this question?" "Have you looked up St. Bernard or St. Augustine?"—as the case might be. Then, taking down the work in question, he would point out the pages bearing on the subject, and with a few well-directed hints, he would send the students away, each to study the question for himself, and in his own way. This plan resulted in showing all how little they had previously known of the question, that none had had such a grasp of it as to make him proud of his superior knowledge; and it always ended in such a thorough understanding of the point at issue, that all arrived at a solution of which the professor could heartily approve.

So did the Church act with her children during the controversy concerning the Immaculate Conception. With unerring finger, she directed them to the sure and hallowed sources of information on this question—the Sacred Scriptures and the writings of the Fathers. Her hints enabled the disputants to correctly understand

what revelation and tradition had taught on this subject; her hand, (as it were), gave them the key to unlock the storehouse of those treasures. Thus, under the stimulus of this controversy, was promoted the study of the Scriptures and the Fathers; thus, the Church brought to light all that antiquity had thought and felt concerning the Blesed Virgin; thus, she published it to the world, and fixed upon it the intelligent attention of all succeeding generations; thus, she permitted her children to clear away the ignorance and misconceptions of men concerning it, until they became persuaded of its truth through the proofs their investigations had discovered; thus, the acceptance of this doctrine became a reasonable, cheerful acceptance, so that the Pope, instead of exercising his authority to impose arbitrarily an unknown doctrine on unwilling Catholics, in defining this dogma, but yielded to the solicitations of the faithful throughout the world, that it should stand forever written in the canons of the Church.

Through this controversy, that which might have remained like gold in the mountain, or like the treasure hidden in the field, known, and imperfectly known, but to a few, was brought forth to the knowledge and appreciation of all. The theological disputes and discussions of the

ages revealed in ALL its importance this sublime truth, that in the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, as was foretold from the beginning, Christ had crushed the Serpent's head, and elevated our race to the highest place in creation.

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

A SERMON

DELIVERED IN THE CATHEDRAL OF
SAINTS PETER AND PAUL, PHILADELPHIA,
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 13, 1874.

"And the Lord God said to the serpent: Because thou hast done this thing, thou art cursed among all cattle and beasts of the earth: upon thy breast shalt thou go, and earth shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.

"I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel."—*Genesis iii, 14-15.*

In the endeavor of a previous sermon to solve certain objections of the Protestant mind to the decree which raised to a dogma of faith the pious belief in Mary's Immaculate Conception, three important truths were elicited: First, that in defining articles of faith, the Church neither changes, diminishes, nor adds to "the faith once delivered to the saints." Second, that the Church allows her children the largest liberty of discussion in their investigation of the truth, and permits all manner of objections to be urged against pious beliefs before her *fiat* makes their acceptance as

dogmas, obligatory. Third, that in the definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, instead of arbitrarily imposing on her children (as was supposed by non-Catholics), an unknown and unacceptable doctrine, the Church, in that definition, but yielded to the importunities of the Catholic world, invoking her authoritative sanction of a pious belief as old as Christianity itself,—to the end, that the central jewel in the Blessed Mother's crown might be made to shine forth resplendently before all men.

From the replies given in that sermon to Protestant difficulties, it was evident that free discussion, full knowledge, and cordial acceptance of this pious belief preceded its dogmatic definition, and that the Immaculate Conception was defined because it had always been believed. In a word, it was evident Catholics believe long before the Church exercises her authority in declaring that these pious beliefs are grounded in divine revelation, and in condemning opposing opinions as false, heretical.

The very deference of the Church to the opinions and wishes of her children in the definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, afforded her opponents an opportunity to change their mode of attack—of which they were not slow to avail themselves. Having failed to sustain the

charge that she tyrannically and capriciously imposes doctrines on her followers,—it was not surprising that her enemies should turn about and accuse her of having been led by the multitude into error, accuse her of adopting the superstitious beliefs of the people, and of engrafting them, through her definitions, on the revealed word of God. The Church's tolerant attitude in regard to open questions has led many to hold her responsible for that corruption of the faith, which (they charge) has crept into the creed of the Catholic Church through the adoption of certain religious beliefs and practices not sanctioned by Holy Scripture.

Protestants say: As the wild olive springs from the olive tree, as the wild grape is the product of the neglected vineyard, as the cockle springs from degenerate wheat, as the Pharisees made the traditions of men binding as divine precepts on the consciences of the Jews, so all the so-called "superstitions" of the Catholic Church concerning the Blessed Virgin, arose from exaggerated and perverted notions of the mystery of the Incarnation; so the dogmatic sanction of these exaggerations and perversions of the truth has corrupted the primitive faith.

As this charge really veils the true source whence belief in the Immaculate Conception

sprang; and prevents men from seeing how that belief assumed its present clear and definite form, and received confirmation, it will be profitable to devote some time to its elucidation.

It is true, that there is no body in which the head and the members, the ruler and the subjects, the teacher and the taught, mutually so much depend upon and influence one another, and are so vitally in accord, as in the Catholic Church. In her, the faith has not been delivered to the keeping of a favored few, but to all in whom the Spirit of Truth dwells, whether they be of the clergy or laity. All these are witnesses to the truth, and contend to keep it inviolate, although all are not vested with authority to decide infallibly questions of doctrine. It was, therefore, fitting that Pope Pius IX should address (as he did from Gaeta, February 1, 1849,) a letter to the Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church, inquiring not only as to their individual opinions, but also as to the sentiments of their people, concerning the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The replies to this letter disclosed the fact that the pious belief in Mary's exemption from all sin had always existed, was everywhere received, and was held by all Catholics. That it was entertained by the faithful, long before theologian or doctor had taught it, long before the Church had defined

it, or by formal decree, required assent to it.

How, it may be asked, did it come to pass that the body of believers should in this doctrine anticipate the teachers in the Church? How did it happen that pious belief preceded, and finally called forth, the dogmatic promulgation of this doctrine?

Catholics were led to entertain this pious belief by AN INSTINCT OF FAITH, by that unction of which St. John speaks, when he says: "Let the unction which you have received from Him abide in you. And you have no need that any man teach you: but as His unction teacheth you all things."

There are human and divine instincts, instincts of nature and instincts of grace. The instincts of of a gentleman, for example, have led many a man to do the right thing at the right time, and in the right way, long before the code of a Chesterfield was ever formulated. Likewise, they will lead him on unusual occasions, and under certain unforeseen circumstances, to rise above conventionalities, to contravene and transgress the ordinary recognized rules of good breeding. The instincts of the true gentleman often enable the the man without culture to perceive the right more readily, and to conform to it more acceptably, than the most polished member of society, who often but conceals his innate rudeness under

empty formalities. In this, as in other things: "The letter killeth, the spirit giveth life."

Again, for example, the instinct of justice leads the multitude to call for the enactment of laws long before rulers, judges and legislatures are disposed to pass them. Likewise, it impels men to agitate for the repeal of laws that are either intrinsically unjust or unjust in their interpretation and administration. Men with a strong natural sense of justice intuitively perceive the right, see at once when law is on one side and justice on the other, when strict adherence to legal formalities works gross injustice, makes true the adage: *Summum jus, summa injuria.* Neither argument, prejudice, interest, nor the sanction of law or of long-standing custom, can blind such men to the right or restrain them from contending for it. This sense of justice has often made the people quicker to apprehend the right than lawgivers and governors: has moved the people to contend for the right against fearful odds, against powerful majorities and names of great authority against ridicule, custom, and the law itself, until wrong was either redressed or avenged,—until their sentiment, like the little leaven hidden in the measure of meal, leavened the whole mass, and the work of justice was peace; or until outraged justice, like the avenging divinity in the proverb,

came with feet shod with wool and struck the wrong-doers with iron hands.

These natural instincts in their sphere, and under certain limitation, infallibly lead men to the right; for they rest on the assumption that the foundations of man's being are laid in divine truth, that men will sooner or later approve and condemn what God approves and condemns. This man or that, this generation or that, may be deceived, but all generations cannot. THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE makes itself felt as THE VOICE OF GOD. The instinct of justice has been implanted in man by the Creator; and its sense in man is a participation in eternal justice, just as human reason is but a ray of the divine light. On the other hand, instincts of faith are born of the influence of the Holy Ghost in guiding souls to truth.

The instinct of faith leads Christians to cling to what is true, and reject what is false. The instinct of faith is not only the unerring guide of the multitude as to what is true and what is false, but is also that spiritual sense which guides the theologian, doctor, bishop, pope, and enables them to believe as Catholics what they might hesitate to teach as binding on the consciences of others. As a man's sense of justice precedes law, so does the instinct of faith precede theology. Law is

but the effort of human reason to conduct worldly affairs conformably to man's innate sense of justice. Theology is but the effort of human reason to show that certain truths have their origin in the inspirations of the Holy Ghost, and to prove that they are conformable to the teachings of Holy Scripture.

If the instincts of nature enable men to recognize THE RIGHT in a world of opinions where passion, prejudice, interest, error, cloud men's minds, how much more must the instinct of faith enlighten Christians as to THE TRUTH in the Church of God, where the Holy Ghost guides unto all truth, and infallibly condemns all error.

An instinct of faith led Christians, at all times, to hold that Mary was always sinless, and to reject with horror any opinion, no matter by whom uttered, that associated her with sin.

More than a thousand years ago, it led the great Doctor of the Church, St. Augustine, to say, in discussing the heritage Adam's offense entails upon all his children: "Except the holy Virgin Mary, of whom for the honor of Our Lord, I will have no question when sin is concerned. For whence can we know the measure of grace conferred on her to vanquish sin on every side, on her who deserved to conceive and bring forth Him who, it is evident, had no sin?"

It led the Council of Trent to say of its decree concerning original sin: "It is not the intention of this Holy Synod to include the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, in the decree which concerns Original Sin."

It led the Council of Basle to declare: "The Immaculate Conception is a doctrine consonant to Catholic worship and faith; to right reason and Holy Scripture."

The learned Petavius, who sought to collect from patristic lore such extracts as he deemed adverse to the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, thus voices the universal testimony of the Fathers: "After this manner, it is to be believed, that God made manifest to Catholic Christians, complete apprehension of what the Immaculate Conception is, and has inspired that notion and firm persuasion concerning her. For what has wrought this pious conviction, but that religious sense, so far above the force of nature, which tells us that grace alone could have fixed their minds with such unwavering firmness of belief on a mystery so heavenly and so pure. I am, therefore, inclined towards the Immaculate Conception, most especially by that common sentiment which is entertained for it by all the faithful, who have this deeply rooted in the innermost recesses of their minds, and by all the signs and

devotions in their power, bear witness that nothing was ever created by God more chaste, more pure, more innocent, more alien, in short, from every condition and stain of sin, than Mary; that she never held anything in common with hell and its ruler, the devil."

There can be no doubt as to the source of this conviction, for Bishop Ullathorne says: "The Immaculate Conception of the Mother of the Redeemer is as ancient as the Mystery of Redemption. It forms a component part of the grand scheme of human reparation, disposed before the ages in the all-conceiving mind of Eternal Wisdom. The first intonations of the mystery reach our ears from the earthly Paradise. The words of the Almighty resound across the ages from the Book of Genesis. And amidst cries of woe and distress from our apostate progenitors, amidst God's terrible denunciations of their crime, amidst the tempest of maledictions that came pouring on the world, amidst the awful curses with which the wrath of the Eternal overwhelmed the author of our ruin, there breathe tender notes of His love for man, which prelude the solution of the world's catastrophe. They announce the coming of a new mother, a mother of life, a mother who shall be victorious over the devil, and shall pass, untouched by his evil powers, to the fulfilment of her great

office. The first intimation of the gospel of peace is the proclamation of that Immaculate Mother."

No matter how far the nations wandered from the truth, no matter how faint or how perverted their traditions of the Fall and the promise of a Redeemer became, nevertheless, they everywhere retained some remembrance of them. St. Paul relates, that when he went to preach to the Athenians, he found a statue erected to THE UNKNOWN GOD; and that he announced himself to them as the servant of that God whom they so long had ignorantly worshipped. In like manner, did Christian Missionaries find throughout Europe statues of Her who was to be the Mother of this Unknown God,—the very *Virgo Paritura*, the Virgin who was to bring forth. "This tradition," says Doctor Northcote, "loses all character of improbability when we remember that the mystery to which it alludes was to be found in the religious belief of most pagan nations of antiquity. It formed, in fact, a portion of that primitive tradition which, however much corrupted and overlaid with fables, had never been entirely effaced."

Thus, it is clear, that this instinct, this conviction concerning Mary's sinlessness, fixed in the minds of the faithful by the Holy Ghost, had its origin in the promise of Redemption made by

God to Adam and Eve in Paradise.

Everywhere, at all times, and by all peoples, was the Mother of the Messias held to be blessed. It mattered not, whether this sentiment was evinced in the honor pagans ignorantly paid her; whether it sprang from admiration of the works of her Son, as in the case of the woman who cried: "Blessed is the womb that bore thee;" or whether it was prompted by the Divine Spirit that enlightened St. Elizabeth, when she saluted Mary as "Blessed amongst women." "We should be prepared," says Doctor Newman, "to believe that the Mother of God is full of grace and glory, from the very fitness of such a dispensation, even though we had not been taught it; and this fitness will appear more clear and certain when we contemplate the subject more steadily."

An instinct, whether of nature or of grace, may enable men to feel right on certain questions and to hold fast, without doubting, to certain views and impressions as just or as true, long before they are able to reason clearly on them, long before they are able to prove the soundness of their own convictions, or to solve satisfactorily the objections of others. It has often happened that men have fallen into error concerning the origin or the proofs of such convictions, without

in the least affecting their correctness, or lessening their certainty in the minds that conceived them, just as men have often fallen into error in their attempts to account for the operations of the so-called mysteries of nature, without weakening the evidence of their existence. A good cause may have a poor advocate. For example, Sir Isaac Newton's rule for ascertaining the imaginary roots of equations had been in use for over a century and a half, before Professor Sylvester discovered its proof. During that time, this rule had been the Gordian knot among algebraists; and they finally became ashamed to advance a proposition which they could not prove, and the only evidence for which was belief in Newton's sagacity.

In like manner, the clear consciousness of the truth, that testimony to the truth which the Divine Spirit renders to our spirit, while it left no doubt as to Mary's Immaculate Conception, nevertheless, left the pious belief encompassed with such difficulties of explanation and proof as made it hard, for its advocates, to reconcile it with accepted and, seemingly, contradictory truths. While the instinct that prompted men to hold this truth, was the breathing of the Holy Ghost, still it was the duty of the Church, through her theologians, to elaborate this pious belief, to define

it clearly, to prove it convincingly.

This elaboration of the truth is not like the chiseling of a statue from a block of marble; rather, it is like the adjusting of a telescope to the eye, so that the individual sees distinctly, stars that are invisible, or, at least, obscure, to the naked eye. This elaboration of the truth is, then, nothing more than enabling the mind to see a doctrine as it really is. In speaking of the Bishop of Hippo, the late Protestant Archbishop of Dublin, Doctor Trench, says: "The Church owes to Augustine, not the forming of her doctrine, for that she can owe to no man, but the bringing out into her clear consciousness that which she had hitherto implicitly possessed, yet had not worked out into perfect clearness, even for herself." While still a Protestant, Doctor Newman wrote on this subject, as follows: "Granting that the Roman (special) doctrines [concerning the Blessed Virgin,] are not found drawn out in the early Church, yet I think there is sufficient trace of them in it, to recommend and prove them, ON THE HYPOTHESIS of the Church having divine guidance."

"The creed of the Church has been one and the same from the beginning, yet it has been so deeply lodged in her bosom, as to be held by individuals, more or less implicitly, instead of

having been delivered from the first, in those special statements, or what are called definitions, under which it is now presented to us, and which preclude mistake or ignorance."

But if Christians were persuaded, if they were convinced, if they could entertain no doubt of Mary's sinlessness; if they burned with indignation against all who, in any manner, even for a moment, associated the Mother of Jesus with sin, they were, nevertheless, required to give a reason for that strong, certain belief which an instinct of faith moved them to profess. In working out this pious belief into "a clear consciousness", in satisfying the world of its correctness, in reconciling it with other revealed truths, Christians met with difficulties, which, at times, seemed calculated to uproot it.

As it often happens, that agitation in favor of the right, with some, becomes the occasion of violence and injustice, so, it was not surprising, that some, in their efforts to prove this pious belief, to reconcile it with well-known dogmas, should have fallen into heresy. There were those who, in their eagerness to find a way out of the difficulties surrounding this belief, fell, alas! into very different errors, concerning Mary. Some, at an early period, contended that Mary was either miraculously conceived of a virgin, or that she

was an angel incarnate; while others, at a later date, contended that she must have been the servant of sin, for at least, an instant. Nothing more clearly indicates the presence of the Holy Ghost, guiding the Church into all truth, than her action with these different schools of thought. The Church smote both with her anathema; for, in her defence of the truth, she had no more toleration for the pious exaggeration which robbed Mary of a participation (even if sinless) in our human nature, and a subjection to its laws, than she had for the lying accusation that dishonored that Immaculate One, by attributing to her even a momentary contact with sin.

The difficulties theologians encountered in formulating the pious belief in the Immaculate Conception into a dogma of faith, were chiefly three:—First, in explaining the death of the Blessed Virgin; second, in showing how one who had never sinned, could have been redeemed; third, in proving the doctrine from Holy Scripture.

The fact that Mary died, has always been used as an argument to prove that she had sinned. In proof of the assertion that only those die who have sinned, the text from St. Paul is quoted: "By one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death, and so death has passed unto all men, in whom all have sinned." Why then, it is

often asked, was Mary made subject to death, (at once the evidence and the punishment of sin), unless she had sinned?

While, according to the text quoted above, sin and death are made co-extensive, nevertheless, it must be remembered, that there is no law without an exception. The saying is: "The exception proves the rule." Take, for example, the declaration of Our Lord: "Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he can not enter into the Kingdom of God." From these words, it appears that a baptism of water is essential to salvation, yet it is admitted on all sides, that a baptism of blood, martyrdom, is sufficient, under certain circumstances, for salvation, although Christ makes no mention of an exception to what, from His words concerning baptism, appears to be a universal law. If, however, neither in the passage quoted, nor elsewhere, does Christ make express allusion to this exception, He, nevertheless, uses at other times, language that clearly implies and teaches there is such an exception. He says: "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends." And again, He says: "Whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the gospel, shall save it." In like manner, it will be seen, later on, that the words, "I will put enmities

between thee and the woman", clearly imply that Mary is the exception to the law so absolutely laid down in the text quoted from St. Paul. As Enoch and Elias were made the exceptions to the decree that it is appointed unto all men once to die, so was Mary made the exception to the law: In Adam, all have sinned.

The fact that Christ, who had no sin, died, proves that death, in itself, is no evidence of sin. Death is not, in itself, an evil like sin. The argument against the Immaculate Conception drawn from Mary's death, rests upon the hypothesis that original justice and innocence must carry with them, after the Fall, the immortality granted to our first parents. In a word, that God owes it to all free from original sin, that they should be placed, naturally and supernaturally, in the condition of Adam and Eve before their prevarication.

Adam was immortal, in the sense that he would not die, and not in the sense that he could not die. His body was mortal, as is our body. Immortality was a superadded gift, a gift from the pure bounty of God, which neither Adam's human nature, nor supernatural destiny, nor his original justice and innocence, made it in any way incumbent on God to confer upon him. If God had not given this gift to Adam, his human nature

would have proved as perfect when glorified in resurrection, as it would, had Adam remained faithful, and passed from earth to heaven without dying. His original justice and innocence would have made Adam, while on earth, as pleasing in God's sight, if they had not been accompanied by immortality. In the first instance, instead of having placed them in Paradise, God might have placed Adam and Eve in a wilderness, subject to disease and death, and required them to labor for subsistence, without in the least diminishing their sanctity.

After their first sin, God might have annihilated the guilty pair, and have created another in justice and innocence, yet subject to the same natural conditions as He made the descendants of the guilty pair subject. If Adam and Eve had confessed their sin, and contritely asked for mercy, God might have pardoned them, so that their sin would not have been transmitted to their posterity; and yet, as a temporal punishment of their infidelity, He might have deprived them and their posterity of the natural gifts, immortality among them, which He so bountifully superadded to the sanctifying grace, wherewith He had adorned their souls. In this case, all the children of Adam would have been conceived without original sin; they would have come into

the world with souls made pleasing to God through sanctifying grace, while their bodies would be subject to death. In this supposition, they would be precisely in the same condition in which Mary was conceived.

When the superadded gifts were lost, it was not God's pleasure to restore them, at least immediately, to any child of Adam, on its acquisition of sanctifying grace. It was His will, however, that they should be restored mediately. For example, men would acquire knowledge through God's revelations to them, and the illuminations of the Holy Ghost; they would acquire control over their appetites, through grace that would enable them to make successful issue with temptation; and immortality would be restored to their bodies in the resurrection. Baptism, for example, which now remits the guilt and the eternal punishment of sin, removes death, one of its temporal punishments, only mediately in the resurrection.

Thus, we are enabled to understand what theologians mean, when they distinguish the objection based upon the death of the Blessed Virgin, by saying: Mary died, not because she had sinned, but because she was a descendant of Adam. She was included in the general condemnation of the human race, just as unborn children may be said to be included in it, but she was in the first

instant preserved through the merits of her Son from contracting the slightest stain of sin. As theologians say: She was not regenerated, but created in grace. The decree makes no claim of immunity from the temporal consequences of Adam's sin, but only that her soul was sanctified the very moment it took possession of her body. As well, then, might men argue that Mary was not exempt from original sin because God did not convert the earth into a paradise for her at her birth, as to argue that she sinned because He did not grant her immunity from death. All that Catholics claim for Mary, is summed up in this sentence of Cardinal Lambruschini: "Say what you please of Mary, but do not say that she was ever defiled, the slave of the devil, the enemy of God, that she was ever accursed."

Herein, arises the difficulty as to Mary's redemption, if she had not sinned. The very etymology of the word REDEMPTION, as well as the phrases used to describe its effects, and as well as the sense in which it was understood as applying to the human family, led men to restrict the meaning of the word redemption to the payment of a ransom, to a deliverance from actual bondage, to a cleansing from defilement already contracted. How then could Mary have been redeemed, how could her words be true:

"My spirit hath rejoiced in God my *Saviour*," if she had been always sinless?

The claim of St. Thomas, that she, in order to have been redeemed, must have been the servant of sin for at least an instant, was repugnant to the universal sentiment of Christendom as to Mary's sinlessness; it handed Mary over to the devil, and gave up all that was dear to the Mother of Jesus, by making her, for at least an instant, the enemy of God. "Grant to sin and the devil but one moment," says Bishop Ullathorne, "and we give up everything, and abandon Mary's stainless honor. With God, the first moments are supreme moments. Lucifer fell from God in a moment, and with but a thought! Sin is measured, not by time, but by depth of defilement. It is better to be an exile from God for eternity, than to be a sinner for one moment. Mary would have preferred to have been neither the Virgin, nor the Blessed One, nor the Mother of God, nor the Queen of Angels and Saints, than to have been for one moment graceless, stripped of innocence, hateful to God. In that one moment, are all those treasures staked that are most dear and precious to the Virgin Mother of God."

It was St. Bonaventure who opened the way out of this difficulty, who showed that sinlessness due

to the merits of Christ, and the claim that Mary had been redeemed, were consistent. He suggested, that redemption in Mary's case might have been a presanctification. One of his disciples, Duns Scotus, not only showed, that this was the correct solution of this difficulty, but also that preservation from sin was a higher, fuller redemption from sin than a cleansing from sin, just as the battle by which a city is saved from falling into the enemy's hands, is a greater victory than that by which it is recaptured, after having been taken possession of by the enemy, and, perhaps, pillaged by him.

Theologians went further still. They showed, that Mary's immunity from sin was not only a higher form of redemption, but that it was necessary to the completeness of Christ's victory over Satan. No one doubts, that Christ's victory was most complete; that there was nothing wanting in it. Who, on the other hand, can fail to see, that if Mary had been conceived in sin, Christ had lost, and Satan had gained something all-important in the battle of man's salvation; and that, if but one had been preserved from falling into his power, that Satan had lost, and that Christ had shown His power completely over him. "It had been hard, it had been a victory for the Evil One," says Doctor Newman, "if the whole

human race had passed away, nor any one instance in it occurred, to show what the Creator had intended it to be. It was a season of grace and prodigy, and these were to be exhibited in a special manner in the person of His Mother. It was fitting for His honor and glory that she, who was the instrument of His bodily presence, should first be a miracle of His grace; it was fitting that she should triumph where Eve had failed, and that she should 'bruise the Serpent's head' by the spotlessness of her sanctity." Wordsworth understood this very well when he called Mary:

"Our tainted nature's solitary boast."

This idea of redemption, as applied to Mary, is plainly presented in Paradise, when God says to the Serpent: "Because thou hast done this thing, I will put enmities between thee and the woman." Satan had just triumphed, had listened in satisfaction to God pronouncing sentence of exile and death upon Adam and Eve, had, as it seemed to him, frustrated God's design in creating man, and, consequently, felt secure in his victory. But his exultation was to be short-lived. In the words just quoted, God seems to say to him: "Behold thy work, the consequence of thine envy! Dream not, however, that thou hast achieved a victory over Me, that thou hast destroyed My work! Thou, indeed, hast overcome this woman;

but proud as thou art, satisfied as thou art with thy victory, know that of her daughters, I shall raise up One, against whom thou shalt gnash thy teeth in impotent fury, for whose heel thou shalt lie in wait, only that she may overcome thee in every way, one who shall CRUSH THY HEAD!" In Mary the power of God was made manifest. How appropriately, then, may we apply to her the words of the Book of Judith: "The Lord has blessed thee by His power, because by thee, He hath brought our enemies to naught."

While we nowhere read in Sacred Scripture, in precise words, that Mary was conceived without sin, that she was immaculate; yet her sinless conception is as clearly implied in the prophetic text from Genesis, as the notion of a *parent* is necessarily suggested by the word *child*. Her freedom from sin is as clearly deducible from the words: "I will put enmities between thee and the woman," as the Ten Commandments are deducible from the two commandments: Love God, and Love thy neighbor as thyself.

While all dogmatic truths are certainly contained in Scripture, yet seldom do we find them named or expressly stated in Scripture. For example, while the doctrine of the Trinity is clearly taught in the Gospels, nowhere in the Sacred Text is the word "trinity" to be found.

Many truths are often locked up in a single word. Take the definition of God, for example,—He is a perfect being, of whom all imperfections must be denied, and of whom all conceivable perfections must be predicated. This implies, that God is eternal, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, just, merciful, loving. Doctrines must be evolved by argument from the Scripture. If truths had all been expressly stated in Scripture, there would have been no need of the *Apostles' Creed* or of the *Nicene Creed* to emphasize them.

The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is clearly implied in these words of the Book of Genesis: "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed, and she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel." The following paraphrase of this verse, by Passaglia, places the meaning of these words beyond doubt: "The seed of the woman is Jesus, the Messias, the woman no other than Mary, of whom was born Jesus. Mary, then, is the woman divinely predicted in the text as Satan's direct, implacable enemy. Can we imagine that she, between whom and the Serpent, God placed irreconcilable enmities, began her existence not as the enemy of Satan, but as the enemy of God? Can we imagine that God while constituting her the representative of holiness and

redeeming power, passed upon her the sentence of sin and death? that, whilst proclaiming perpetual enmity between her and the Serpent, He delivered her unto Satan's power, and branded her with the mark of Satanic victory? that, whilst declaring her the instrument that would bring about the future redemption, He excluded her from the inheritance of future glory? that, whilst declaring she should vanquish the Serpent, He decreed that she should be first vanquished by the Serpent?"

On the same text, Bishop Ullathorne discourses as follows: "No sooner does our first mother fall, than our second mother appears. Satan seduces Eve, and God upholds before him THE WOMAN who shall resist him to his overthrow. In Paradise, the Almighty proclaims a lasting enmity between those two. Satan may lie in wait for the New Eve, but God has set her foot upon his head, and threatens him with fears of her and of her seed. But why should Satan fear her, if she is to be his prey? If enmity is already placed between them by the eternal decree which resounded through the trees of Paradise; if that decree resounded for all future time, 'I WILL PLACE ENMITIES BETWEEN THEE AND THE WOMAN,' could they ever be friends? Could Mary ever be his subject, his slave? If, in the perpetual con-

flict between her and the enemy of man, she is to crush his head, how could this be explained, except by an ORIGIN as well as a life in which the devil had no part?"

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION.

A SERMON

DELIVERED IN ST. JOHN'S CHURCH,
PHILADELPHIA,
DECEMBER 8, 1873.

"Holiness becometh thy house, O Lord, throughout length of days."—*Psalm xcii, 5.*

The one grand leading idea presented for our consideration in almost every part of the Mass and the Office of the feast of the Immaculate Conception is, that Mary was the tabernacle, temple, house, so to speak, in which the Redeemer of the World lived for nine months; and that all the graces with which Mary was enriched were given her to make her a dwelling-place worthy of the Son of God. In the prayer at Mass this morning, the Church says: "O God, who didst cause that a virgin should be conceived without sin, to the end that she should be made a meet dwelling-place for thy Son: O God, who through the precious death of thy Son forseen by Thee didst keep her clean from all stain, hear us, we beseech Thee, and grant that by her prayers, we also who are presently defiled, may finally be made pure,

and so with her attain unto Thee." In the Office to-day, the Church applies to Mary these words: "Wisdom has built for Himself a house."

When an architect is requested to furnish a design for a house, we hear him ask: Who are to occupy this edifice? What is their position in the world? What resources will be placed at my command to make the building harmonize in every way with the wishes and dignity of its occupants? Having carefully considered the answers he receives to these questions, he proceeds to draw plans (1) of what will be necessary to the work, (2) of what will be useful, and (3) of what will be ornamental. In the development of these plans he is most careful to exclude from the building everything that would be displeasing to those who will reside in it. Thus, he succeeds in making the building provide for the necessities, conveniencies, and comforts of its occupants; in making it comport with their wealth and station, as well as pleasing and satisfactory to their tastes.

Human architects generally accomplish this much, though they fail, at times, through lack of intelligence, skill, or means.

The Divine Architect, however, never fails to attain His purposes, to execute satisfactorily His designs.

God the Father wanted a house for His Only-

begotten Son, and He created Mary to be that house, to be the living temple of the Incarnate Word. God Himself drew the plan of this temple,—"Wisdom built for Himself a house." It was, then, designed and built solely for the Word made flesh, for the eternal, consubstantial Son of God, of whom St. John writes: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word WAS God."—A God, then, infinite in all perfections, infinite in holiness, dwelt in this house, in this living temple. "He that created me rested in my tabernacle." In this case, then, the infinite knowledge of the Builder warrants us in assuming the super-eminent fitness of the building for its divinely ordained purpose. The exhaustless wealth and consummate skill of the Builder warrant us in assuming the priceless value and ineffable beauty of the building. In a word, we can infallibly argue in this case that God has done what He ought to have done.

If it be not given to us to conceive with what wealth of grace, with what beauty of holiness, this house was adorned, we may at least inquire: What one thing is there which, according to God's design, could never have been permitted to enter into it? We may ask: What does this God of infinite holiness most abhor, detest, with an everlasting hatred? What one thing is there which

He could not have tolerated in His dwelling-place? He that annihilated Himself in becoming man might have dispensed with many things which would, according to our worldly notions, have befitted His abode, but what one thing must He have, by very force of His nature, excluded from it?

According to the Apostle, Our Lord became like unto us in all things except,—in what? Except in sin.

Sin, therefore, must have been excluded from this, His carefully considered house. "The Architect," says St. Proclus, "was not dishonored in His work, for He dwelt in the house He Himself had built. The clay did not soil the potter in refashioning the vessel he had moulded. Nor did aught from the Virgin's womb defile the most pure God; for, as He received no stain in forming it, He received none in proceeding from it." If holiness became the material temple wherein God dwelt in the spirit of His power, how much more, then, did it become the living temple in which He dwelt for nine months?—The temple in which, according to a spiritual writer, were forged the weapons by which He overcame the devil,—the "House of Gold" enclosing the well-spring whence He drew that blood, one drop of which was capable of saving the

world. Well, then, may we say with the Psalmist: "Holiness becometh thy house, O Lord!" Well then, may we cry out in the words of the Office of the day: "The Most High sanctified His temple, placed its foundations in the holy mountain, and built it in the sun."

While Christ came to seek and save the lost, to save His people from their sins, He had no sin. And St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, says: "It was fitting that we should have a high-priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, SEPARATED FROM SINNERS, and made higher than the heavens." Sin was Jesus' cross; it made Him "the Man of Sorrows." It was not so much the physical sufferings He would have to endure in redeeming man, and which were always in His sight, that so saddened Our Saviour, that His countenance was never, during his mortal life, lighted up with a smile of joy; it was, rather, His horror of Sin, His certain knowledge that, in redeeming the world, the Lord would lay "on Him the iniquity of us all." When, in obedience to His Father's will, He accepted the chalice containing the sins of the world, St. Luke tells us, so shocked was that human nature which he had taken in Mary's chaste womb, so great was its agony in coming in contact with sin, that its every pore shed drops of blood.

Could there be greater antipathy, antagonism, than that which was thus manifested between sin and Jesus Christ? Can we, then, for a moment, suppose that Christ's human nature, which, in Gethsemane, swooned in such awful agony when sin first touched it, that the Eternal Father had to support it by a miracle, had to send an angel to console and sustain it, can we believe, I ask, that that body was drawn from a sinful source, that it remained for nine months, with a sinful creature, in the closest of all relations,—those of mother and child? Can we believe that the body which, at its first contact with sin, poured forth its life-stream in a bloody sweat, had drawn that very blood from a heart in which sin had once found a home?

No; the thought that Mary was conceived in sin can not be entertained. It is impious; it outrages every sentiment of piety; it is contrary to every dictate of reason; for who can believe Jesus to be the Son of God, without being constrained to believe that Mary was created immaculate. The sanctity of God required this. The dwelling-place of Jesus must, therefore, have been FOREVER free from sin. "Holiness becometh thy house, O Lord, THROUGHOUT LENGTH OF DAYS."

Here, we may be asked: Is it not pressing this argument too far, to make it prove that Mary was

free from original sin? Does this argument prove anything more, than that Mary was sinless when Jesus was conceived in her womb? Did the sanctity of God require, that Mary should have been PRESERVED from all sin, or only that she should have been purified from sin, were it but for an instant, before the incarnation of His Divine Son? It may be urged: While it is true, that there was an antipathy between Christ and sin, as shown in the Agony in the Garden; and while it is true, that an antipathy exists between Him and the unrepentant sinner, there is certainly naught to separate Him from the repentant soul, for does not the Gospel tell us: There is more joy in heaven over one sinner that does penance than over ninety-nine just who need not penance? In a word, does not repentance for sin often make the soul more pleasing to God than mere innocence?

We may be told, too, that the Prophet of the Messias in the Old Law, as well as His Precursor in the New, were prepared for their respective offices by a *purification* from sin, and not by a *preservation* from it. The lips of Isaias, who foretold His coming, were purified with a living coal snatched by an angel from the altar in heaven. John the Baptist was sanctified in his mother's womb, that he might be made worthy to "prepare the way before His face," to point Him

out on the banks of the Jordan, saying: "Behold the Lamb of God! behold Him, who taketh away the sins of the world!" In accordance with this, which, at best, is but a superficial analogy, some may be tempted to assert, that Mary was similarly sanctified, purified, only in that immeasurably higher degree demanded by her exceptional position.

This argument rests upon the false supposition, that Mary's office differed only in degree and not in KIND from those of Isaias and the Baptist. Her relations to Jesus not only exceeded their offices in the degree of its exaltation, but it also totally differed from them in its nature. The Church says: "Mary, none like unto thee shall follow, as none has preceded thee!"

Others may be the friends or even the ministers of God, but Mary was THE MOTHER OF GOD.

"To proclaim this alone of the Blessed Virgin," says St. Anselm, "exceeds every height and name, after that of God, it is possible to think of. She in whom He is to take His earthly life must have a sanctity greater than which cannot be imagined in a pure creature, a sanctity co-extensive with her existence, a purity on which the shadow of ungodliness cannot rest, even for a moment of time."

On this point, Bishop Ullathorne says: "The

preparation of all those who preceded Mary, began very early, sometimes at their very origin, at any rate, PREVIOUS to their immediate call to their special office. Can we then suppose, that she who was pre-elected to the most pre-eminent of all offices was not prepared and pre-sanctified in a yet more especial manner. She is the sum and completion of all preparations. She is no other than the house of God. It was most fitting, therefore, that Mary should have been preserved from sin rather than purified from it. Grace may remove the sin and blot out the culpability, nevertheless, after original sin has been remitted there remains the loss of original justice which, like lost virginity, cannot be restored. However atoned for, that dishonor rests upon the soul like the stain upon the escutcheon, which no after deeds can succeed in erasing."

There is, then, no analogy between the office of a minister of Christ, and that of His mother. Indeed, there is an essential difference between them. A man, for example, may tolerate in a servant, what he must shrink from in a mother. He may point with pride to the friend whom his influence has reclaimed, but not to a mother whose reformation is the evidence of her own lapse and of her son's dishonor. Men wish to have their mothers adorned with every virtue, but

above all, free from every stain. How much more, then, is this true of Christ who, unlike the children of men, had the selection of His mother, had the power and the will to create her after His own desire: "He that created me, rested in my tabernacle." Must He not have created His mother in grace, free from sin? "Holiness becometh Thy house, O Lord, throughout length of days."

"If universal reason and the spirit of all law," asks Passaglia, "would rise up astonished and distressed, to see a son accuse his mother, prove her guilt, and bring her to death, when he had the power abundantly to save her from that ignominy; can we look on Jesus Christ, the perfect man, the God-man, the model and example of all sons, and then believe that He, who is both judge and accuser, left His mother in the common wreck and condemnation, when it only asked His will to save her from it, and yet to satisfy all justice?" The answer to this is, that Christ did for His mother all that He could have done, that He created her sinless, immaculate, did not abandon her to the enemy, did not permit the image of God in her to be defaced by sin. The sanctity and the filial piety of Jesus demanded that He should preserve His mother from sin. He may indeed permit His sacred

Body, under the eucharistic species, to enter our hearts when they are purified from sin, but He could not have taken from a sinful source, or, from one that had been contaminated with sin, that sacred Flesh which was, so to speak, to be grafted into our bodies in Holy Communion, and thereby repair the ravages of sin in them to the end that they may, in the general resurrection, rise "unto the perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ."

If it be not too irreverent to entertain the thought, let us, for the sake of argument, suppose that Mary was conceived in sin, that she was defiled, was once the servant of sin, was branded with the mark of Satan's victory—original sin. Let us, then imagine, we see the Son of God leaving the bosom of the Eternal Father, leaving heaven and its blessed spirits, and coming down to earth in search of His habitation, His living temple. What do we behold? We behold the Son of the living God, the Word, "by whom all things were made," looking over the earth in vain, for a solitary abode that has not been defiled by sin. We behold Satan approach, and say to Him: "Thou canst not find a single dwelling-place that is all Thine own. Thou canst have but such as I yield to Thee. Thou, whom I would not serve in heaven, must honor me on

earth by becoming my guest. Bow down then, King of Glory, for Thou canst enter Thy living temple only by passing through a portal over which are emblazoned the emblems of my victory! Thou canst rest only in a place contaminated by my touch! This house may henceforth be Thine, but while in possession of it, remember it once was mine,—that, mighty as Thou art to regain it from me, Thou hadst not the power to save one, no, not one, *not even Thy mother* from falling into my hands, from becoming my slave!"

If Mary had been conceived in sin, Satan could thus have mocked Christ, could have taunted Him, saying: "There was one thing Thou couldst not do!" Now, we know it was not in Satan's power to mock the Mighty One. It was then absolutely necessary, in order to leave Satan nothing to exult in, that Christ should not only have redeemed men by cleansing them from the stain of sin, but that He should have redeemed at least *one*, as He did Mary, by preserving her from being defiled with sin, by saving her from the slavery of the devil. The preservation of Mary from sin, was not only required by the sanctity and filial piety of Jesus, but it was necessary also, to vindicate Christ's power over Satan; for it was in the Immaculate Conception of Mary that the great battle of Redemption was fought, and the

great victory of our salvation won. In some of His works, the Scripture tells us the finger of God is visible, in others His hand, but in the Immaculate Conception of Mary both reason and revelation assure us, that He hath shown forth the full power of His almighty arm. "He hath showed might in His arm. * * * * * * He that is mighty hath done great things in me: and holy is His name."

THE SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY ROSARY.

A SERMON

DELIVERED IN ST. MARY'S CHURCH,
LANCASTER, PA.,

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 4, 1868.

"As the vine I have brought forth a pleasant odour: and my flowers are the fruit of honor and riches.

"I am the mother of fair love, and of fear, and of knowledge, and of holy hope.

"In me is all grace of the way and of the truth, in me is all hope of life and of virtue.

"Come over to me all ye that desire me, and be filled with my fruits:

"For my spirit is sweet above honey, and my inheritance above honey and the honey-comb.

"My memory is unto everlasting generations.

"They that eat me shall yet hunger: and they that drink me shall yet thirst.

"He that hearkeneth to me, shall not be confounded: and they that work by me shall not sin.

"They that explain me shall have life everlasting."—*Ecclesiasticus xxiv. 23-31.*

On the first Sunday of October, the Church celebrates THE SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY ROSARY.

This festival was instituted by Gregory XIII to commemorate the victory gained by the Christians over the Mahomedans at Lepanto, Sunday, October 7th, 1571.

The importance of this victory cannot be over-

estimated. At the time it was won, the Turks threatened to bring all Christendom under their domination. The fate of Christianity itself, humanly speaking, depended largely upon the success of the forces which Pius V had mustered to resist the aggressions of the Sultan of Turkey.

Few, nowadays, can form an adequate idea of the evils from which the engagement at Lepanto saved Europe. Only those can realize them who have witnessed, or who have suffered, the hardships and cruelties inflicted upon Christians under Moslem sway. In their treatment of captives, the Turks involved body and soul alike in misery. The indignities offered to Christian women, the crimes committed against them, were such that, when men were not constrained by pity to prevent them, the clouds might have been expected to fall in very shame and veil them from view. As far back as the thirteenth century, the condition of those in bondage became so intolerable, that many sought surcease from their tortures in death or in apostasy.

So moved to pity was the Mother of the Redeemer by the sufferings and the dangers of these souls, that she incited some of her devout clients to organize a society for their ransom. The rescue of these sufferers, oftentimes, could be effected only by others voluntarily taking their

places. Since Jesus of Nazareth died on the Cross that sinners might live, the world has not witnessed a more heroic spectacle than that offered by the members of the Order of Ransom, when they consigned themselves to slavery, to a living death, in order that their weaker brethren might not everlastingly perish.

It was not then surprising, that the Vicar of Jesus Christ should, in a moment of supreme peril to all Christians, turn to *Her*, and urge all Christians to have recourse to her assistance, who during two centuries had succored the hapless ones, through an Order instituted under her protection, for their redemption. It was not surprising either, that she should come to their rescue. Rightly, therefore, was the victory attributed to her who, in all dangers, has ever proved herself the HELP OF CHRISTIANS. The disparity of numbers, left the Christians scarcely a human hope of success. They placed all their confidence in Mary. The result proved that she did not forsake them. The power of the Mahomedans was completely broken by the reverse they sustained at Lepanto.

This festival was also instituted in order to afford the faithful clients of the Blessed Virgin, an opportunity to express their gratitude to God for the numberless favors obtained through the

intercession of His holy Mother in the devotion of the Rosary.

Why is the devotion called THE MOST HOLY ROSARY? The Church carefully weighs her words. She selects terms to convey her meaning as precisely as it is possible for language to express it. However short language, in its poverty, may fall of expressing fully her meaning, the Church never indulges in exaggeration. Yet she calls the devotion of the Rosary—MOST HOLY. And most holy, it shall be found to be in its origin, in its prayers, in its object, and in its effects.

The word *Rosary*, as applied to this devotion, means GARDEN OF ROSES. It is, of course, figurative, and is intended to impress upon all, that they will be able to gather from this devotion, flowers of piety, and the fruits of every virtue. "My flowers are the fruit of honor and riches."

In Sacred Scripture, our prayers and good works, because of an analogy they bear to them, are likened to material things. For example, our pious deeds are compared to light, in the following text: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." Good example is likened to the perfume of precious ointments: "Let us run in the odor of thy ointments." Incense, in the words of holy David, has

become a symbol of prayer: "Let my prayer ascend like incense in thy sight." Men regard those who live soberly, justly, and piously, as diffusing around them by holiness of life, a sweet odor, just as fragrant flowers fill the surrounding atmosphere with perfume. Hence, Saint Paul says of those who lead holy lives: "They are the good odor of Christ unto God." And men say of them at death: "They died in the odor of sanctity."

Christians were accustomed to decorate the altars of the Blessed Virgin, and to crown her statues, with flowers, because these were emblematic of Mary's virtues. Hence, they hoped their prayers and devotions would be as acceptable to the Holy Virgin as the sweet-smelling flowers they offered her were agreeable to men, and that their contemplation of these flowers would lead to the cultivation, in their own hearts, of those virtues which found in flowers such beautiful emblems. The Rosary is then fittingly called Mary's *chaplet*, or wreath.

The Rosary is a string of one hundred and fifty small beads, divided by fifteen larger ones into tens or decades, as they are commonly called. The string of beads ordinarily used has but five decades, and is but a third part of the Rosary.

The arrangement of beads in this manner for

the purpose of telling prayers, shows that they come to us, not only from the earliest Christian times, but that they were in use among the Jews. And it is not at all unlikely, that the Blessed Virgin used something very similar to a string of beads, in counting her prayers. A monk, when asked why members of his Order did not wear buttons on their habits, replied: "When our Order was founded, buttons had not yet been invented; and the habit of to-day is an exact counterpart of that devised when the Order was instituted." The form of the Rosary shows that it dates back to the period when beads or pebbles were used in all sorts of calculations.

Before Gerbert, a Benedictine Monk, (afterward Sylvester II,) had mastered the learning of the Moors, and had reduced mathematics to a European science, men used to count by placing pebbles at the intersection of grooves, cut in boards. From this mode of reckoning, we have the word *calculation*, which is derived from the Latin word *calculus*, a pebble; also, the name of one of the higher branches of mathematics—calculus.

In time, pebbles were supplanted by beads. So completely identified did beads become with the counting of prayers, that the word "bead" signified *prayer*. The advantage of a string of beads for those who had a certain number of prayers to say,

was, that it allowed the mind and heart to be concentrated entirely on God, while the hand mechanically told the number, by passing a bead between the fingers.

The one hundred and fifty beads represent the psalms of David. The devotion of such of the Jews and of the early Christians as could read and procure books, was the reading of the psalms. In order to furnish a substitute to those who could not read or procure books, vocal prayers were assigned to the number of one hundred and fifty,—to be told, by transferring a pebble (for every prayer) from one pocket to another, or by passing a bead through the fingers.

The Rosary was recited in this form until the thirteenth century. While, since that era it has developed, and been made eminently practical, yet there is nothing in it to-day, that did not spring from the germs it held then

It was then aptly called, the People's Psalter. The psalms of David are very suggestive of the Rosary as developed by Saint Dominic. Some of the psalms are prophetic, descriptive of our Saviour's coming, His office, and His reign. These correspond to the Joyful Mysteries. Other psalms are lamentations for sin, and prayers for deliverance from sufferings and enemies. These correspond to the Sorrowful Mysteries. Then

again there are those which are hymns of thanksgiving and praise, psalms of victory. These correspond to the Glorious Mysteries.

The fifteen larger beads denote the mysteries of the Rosary. The arrangement of the Rosary in this form, with its meditation on the mysteries, is generally credited to Saint Dominic. It matters not, whether the Rosary of to-day was given to the Saint by the Blessed Virgin herself, (who is said to have appeared to him): or whether it was the result of an inspiration of grace. It has proved its title to heavenly origin, by its fruits. "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit: neither can an evil tree bring forth good fruit."

"Wherefore, by their fruits, you shall know them."

Saint Dominic was sent into Toulouse to convert the Albigenses. These heretics denied revealed truths, rejected the Sacraments, and assailed in their falsehoods, the prerogatives of the Blessed Virgin. In their advocacy of communism and free love, they sought to upturn the very foundations of society itself.

At first, Saint Dominic relied upon the force of his arguments, upon the simple eloquence of truth, to disabuse them of their errors. He thought it sufficient to expose heresy, in order to make men turn from it; to show them truth, in

order to lead them to embrace it. As well might the husbandman expect harvests from seed that is sown without taking the condition of the field into account, as the preacher expect the word of life to take possession of the mind, irrespective of the condition of the heart. The seed that falls on the beaten path, on the shelving rock, or among thorns, will produce no fruit; so when the heart is hardened in sin, the word of God can produce no effect on the soul. As the ground must be broken, the briars uprooted, and a home prepared for the seed, before it can be expected to produce fruit, so must the hearts of men, in like manner, be prepared for the reception of those divine truths which, in the Parable of the Sower, are called the "good seed." It is a delusion to hold, that heresy is simply an error of judgment, involving no moral guilt. This is, no doubt, to a certain extent, true of those who are born to heresy as an inheritance, but it is never true of those with whom heresy originates. It has been well said that heresy is a disease of the heart; that the perversion of the intellect only takes place after the heart has been corrupted. Hence, the Church never contents herself with a mere condemnation of heresy, a mere uprooting of error; she always prepares the heart by self-examination for the reception of truth which she fosters

by devotion. The first step in the abjuration of error is the confession of the sin in which it had its birth.

To destroy the heresies of the Albigenses, Saint Dominic devised the Rosary as it is recited to-day. At every prayer in this devotion, truth is made to confront error; while pious meditation on that truth extirpates vice, and plants the seed of virtue in the soul. The Rosary familiarizes those who recite it with every fact in the history of the Redemption. It is a panorama, in which every scene in the life of our Blessed Lord and of His holy Mother, is brought vividly before the mind, so that all can understand it. It is, in short, a pious exercise which expresses faith in the mysteries of religion, whilst it preserves that faith by self-examination and prayer.

We begin the devotion by signing ourselves with the sign of the Cross, and by saying:—"In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen." Thus showing in this, as in every other act of our religion, that every blessing we possess or hope for, even the Blessed Virgin herself, comes to us from the Cross of Jesus, was purchased for us by the blood of Christ. After this, an *Our Father* is said in honor of the undivided Trinity, then a *Hail Mary* and a *Holy Mary* are said in honor of each of the

three persons of the Trinity. When this has been done, an *Our Father* and ten *Hail Marys* and ten *Holy Marys* are said in remembrance of each of the mysteries.

Those, not of the household of faith, frequently take exception to this feature of the Rosary, and assert, that it shows that Catholics pay ten times more devotion to Mary than to Jesus. This objection is on a par with the answer, said to have been made to it, that Catholics value one *Our Father* as highly as they do ten *Hail Marys*. No such comparison is instituted by the Rosary.

The one great object of this devotion is, to impress upon men the truths connected with the Redemption. The story of the great mystery of the Incarnation is best told in the words the Angel addressed to Mary. The strongest fortress of Christianity is founded on the words: "Holy Mary, Mother of God." Let men but confess Mary to be the Mother of God, and they at once recognize in Christ all those attributes of the Deity which lent infinite value to the sufferings His humanity endured for the salvation of men. Let men confess Mary to be the Mother of God, and they at once recognize in her a dignity, greater than which it is impossible for the human mind to conceive a creature invested with. To keep these cardinal truths before the minds of men, to

impress them deeply upon their hearts, is the reason why the *Hail Mary* and the *Holy Mary* are each repeated ten times. The ten repetitions are, then, primarily, in honor of the divinity and sacred humanity of Jesus Christ, and only secondarily, in honor of Mary, who is no less inseparable from Jesus in the doctrines that concern Him, than she was in the existence she gave Him. The one *Our Father* is used to indicate that the decade has been either commenced or finished.

The matter of the Rosary is made up of the *Our Father*, the *Hail Mary*, the *Holy Mary* and the *Apostle's Creed*, and certainly no objection can be urged against it on this score. The merit of this devotion does not consist solely in these, the best of prayers, but principally, in the meditation which should always accompany their recitation.

What is this meditation?

It is the employment of the three powers of the soul—the memory, the understanding, and the will—on a subject which concerns the spiritual life, with the determination to profit by the lesson which such consideration teaches.

As an illustration of the manner in which the meditation should be made, let us take the second Joyful mystery, THE VISITATION. The memory recalls the facts of this mystery, until the soul seizes upon one, or an aspect of one, which

teaches a lesson that has a practical bearing on the soul's present condition, past offences or the dangers that may beset it in the future. For example, the memory recalls the fact, that Mary went to the assistance of Elizabeth, as soon as the Angel made known her cousin's condition. The intellect holds up this fact as a mirror, in which we can see, how far we have discharged our duties to our neighbor in his spiritual and temporal necesities. It will require but a short examination, to show how far we have fallen short of the example Mary has set us, to show we have not only been remiss, have allowed many opportunities to pass that would, (had they been seized upon,) have proved of great merit to us, and advantage to our neighbor, but that our neglect has been, perhaps, the occasion of much suffering, as well as spiritual loss, to our neighbor. As soon as the memory and understanding thus place forcibly before us our culpability in this particular, the will comes with its resolution, to amend our conduct in this regard, and to imitate Mary more closely in performing works of mercy in the future.

Then, again, the memory may bring up for our consideration, the effects of Mary's visit to Elizabeth. It may show us ,that that visit led Elizabeth to bless God, that it brought sanctification to the infant in her womb. The intellect, again, holds

these effects before us as a mirror, in which to scrutinize our intercourse with others. It, in a word, constrains us to ask: What have been the effects of our visits upon our neighbor's soul? Have those who entertained us been edified by our conversation and conduct? Have they regarded our visits as occasions of benediction to them? Have the little ones, on such occasions been strengthened in virtue by reason of our presence? It is needless to say, that such questions will exhibit, very often, our visits in sad contrast with that of Mary to Elizabeth, that they will reveal those visits as occasions of scandal, as causes of sin to our neighbor. The will then comes with its resolution to extirpate those habits that disedify, and to cultivate those virtues that will prove a salutary example.

These two illustrations suffice to show, that in the Rosary, are verified these words of the text: "He that hearkeneth to me, shall not be confounded: and they that shall work by me shall not sin." "In me, is all grace of the way and of the truth: in me is all hope of life and of virtue."

In the way indicated, every incident of each mystery may be meditated on without exhausting, even in a long lifetime, the practical lessons which the soul may derive from the mystery. The lessons are so numerous and so varied, that they

are suited to every condition of life, and meet the requirements of every circumstance in which a Christian may find himself placed.

The Rosary is, then, a form of devotion adapted to the capacity of the most intelligent, as well as of the simple. It is not a form of prayer suited only to the unlettered, for it is evident, that those who know most, may drink deepest of this unfailing fountain of devotion and instruction. It has been well said of it that "It is a book which the learned, the ignorant, and the blind may read." It is a devotion, which the Church has enriched with many indulgences, which is spread over the world, and which includes in its confraternities the innocent and the penitent, the Pope and the peasant.

If we would understand the efficacy of the Rosary as a prayer, let us look at it in the light of these words of Christ:

"Again, I say to you, that if two of you shall consent upon earth, concerning anything whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done to them by my Father who is in heaven.

"For where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

When the number, the piety, the heroic virtues of those joined together in the devotion of the

Rosary are considered, it must appear manifest that this form of prayer is simply irresistible with God.

Just think of the number of holy souls joined in the confraternities of the Rosary, some still in the world, others in religous communities! Many of these, like Aloysius are angels in human flesh, who, to innocence of life, add bodily mortifications. Others are holy penitents, like Magdalen, Augustine, and Mary of Egypt, who honor God more by their penance than ninety-nine just who need not penance. Think then of this countless number of devout men and women, who, every day, recite the Rosary piously for themselves and their brethren! Think of the dying who, in momentary expectation of seeing God, devoutly offer the prayers of the Rosary as their last petitions to heaven in behalf of their brethren and themselves! Think of those who were once members of these confraternities, who are now among the elect of God, and who constantly watch over the welfare of these fellow members on earth. Think of the prayers, almsdeeds, mortifications of all those united in the Rosary, as presented to Jesus Christ through the hands of His Mother, and may it not be said they do a holy violence to heaven? "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away."

How truly, may it be said of those who, through this devotion, learn the virtues of Mary, and exhibit them in their daily lives:

"They that explain me shall have everlasting life!"

THE HOLY NAME OF MARY.

A SERMON

DELIVERED IN THE CHURCH OF THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, PHILADELPHIA, ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF ITS DEDICATION,—THE FEAST OF THE HOLY NAME OF MARY,

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 1868.

"And in the sixth month, the Angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, called Nazareth,

"To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and THE VIRGIN'S NAME WAS MARY.

"And the Angel being come in, said unto her: Hail full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women.

"Who having heard, was troubled at his saying, and thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be.

"And the Angel said to her: Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God.

"Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name JESUS.

"He shall be great, and shall be called the son of the Most High, and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of David his father: and he shall reign in the house of Jacob forever.

"And of his kingdom there shall be no end.

"And Mary said to the Angel: How shall this be done, because I know not man?

"And Angel answering, said to her: The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.

"And behold thy cousin Elizabeth; she also hath conceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month with her that is called barren.

"Because no word shall be impossible with God.

"And Mary said: Behold the hand-maid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word."—*St. Luke I, 26-38.*

When separated from those near and dear to us by distance or death, we endeavor to cherish their memories by retaining keepsakes, mementoes of them. They are very often remembered in pictures or in statues: sometimes, in some little trifle which, from daily use, became associated with them, and thus serves to recall them to our minds.

However useful these material objects may prove for keeping alive the memories of absent or deceased friends, they oftentimes fail of their purpose; they are often found wanting. Such treasures may be lost or destroyed,—even when preserved, we cannot always have them with us. There is, however, one thing which cannot be lost or destroyed, which we may always retain, and which, more than anything else, becomes representative, memorial of its possessor.

This is the name of the beloved one.

A name is so identified with its possessor, that it serves as a mirror to reflect his life and character,—it becomes an epitome of his history. Hence, we find that eminently good men have so identified themselves with their virtues, and exceptionally evil men with their vices, that the name of the individual became the name of the virtue or vice for which he was noted. For example, Solomon is now a synonym for wisdom; Job, for patience; Herod, for cruelty; while

John is another name for love.

The name, then, excites in us not only a recollection of the person, but also the self-same emotions that the presence of its bearer excites; it awakens in us emulation of his virtues or detestation of his vices. So thoroughly identified does the name become with him whom it designates, that we are commanded not only to praise and bless, but also to adore the name of God.

In this world, there are many names indicative of eminence in some one or other virtue, but to few has it ever been vouchsafed to become illustrious in more than one. To-day, however, we celebrate the feast of one whose name is an epitome of all virtues; the feast of one who, in the language of holy Church, was eminent not only for one virtue, but for having attained the summit of all earthly virtue; who was eminent not only for having attained the summit of earthly virtue, but for having surpassed it: the name of one, elevated by purity and holiness above angels and archangels, above thrones and dominations, above principalities and powers, above the cherubim and seraphim; the name of one, made higher than the heavens, and purer than the sun; the name of one who, in herself, comprehended the virtues of all creatures, consequently, a name, that of all creatures, stands first and best, sec-

ond only to the adorable name of Jesus.

The holy name of Mary.

The poet tells us:

"Human lives are silent teaching,
Be they earnest, mild, and true;
Noble deeds are noblest preaching
From the consecrated few."

The Sacred Scripture says: "Those who instruct others unto justice, shall shine as stars for all eternity." And Christ, in sending the Apostles to teach the nations, declared that they would be "the light of the world." It was then, indeed, most fitting, that the name of her, who was to instruct the world by the example of her exalted virtues, should, even in its etymology, be a name of light. Most appropriately, was given to this pure creature, the name of Mary, which in Hebrew, (according to some), means a drop of ocean's purest foam; but, according to the generally received interpretation which signifies STAR OF THE SEA.

We well know the glory of it, my brethren, but there are those who know it not and, lest they should take scandal at our eulogy of the Mother of God; and, fancy that we exalt her above her Divine Son, let them also understand that when we proclaim Mary in the language of her Office, "beautiful as the moon," it is the teaching of our faith that, just as in the natural order,

the moon receives all her light and beauty from the sun; so in the supernatural order, does Mary, the STAR OF THE SEA, receive all her beauty and brilliancy from the Sun of Justice, from the true Light, that, according to St. John, "enlighteneth every man who cometh into this world," from her Son, her Saviour, Jesus Christ. Let them remember—that all the prerogatives we ascribe to Mary were given to her, not only for Jesus' sake, but that they were purchased for her at the price of Jesus' blood; let them remember, that, like us, she, too, "rejoiced in God her Saviour." With this difference, however: with us, Redemption is a remedy; with Mary, it was a prevention. It cleanses us from stain of sin, while it saved her from coming into contact with sin in any way.

In presenting Mary, to us to-day, for our veneration, under the title of STAR OF THE SEA, the Church wishes us to recognize, therein, one of the offices of the Blessed Virgin, and to avail ourselves of her ministry, by regarding this world as a sea, life as a voyage, men as sailors, and Mary as the Star, whose light will lead those who follow it to the eternal port of safety and rest.

A moment's reflection will show, that this similitude is not far-fetched or constrained; on the contrary, that it is happy and natural, and, there-

fore, fixes our attention on the dangers to be encountered in the spiritual life.

As men at sea have danger to fear from all the elements,—from land, water, air, fire, and the monsters of the deep, so, too, Christians, during life's voyage, have to fear and avoid those spiritual dangers aptly illustrated by the dangers of the sea.

Men at sea have danger to fear from the land, upon whose shoals their vessels are often stranded and rendered useless,—upon whose rocks, their vessels are often wrecked. Christians have danger to fear from the prosperity and honors, from the disappointments and disasters of life, which often either arrest them in their course to heaven, or leave them abandoned wrecks on the shores of eternity.

Men have danger to fear from the water which, when in repose, invites them to embark on ocean's bosom, only to toss them on angry waves and surging billows; by turns, raising them up to the heavens, and depressing them to the depths, forming immense troughs, which threaten to swallow them up. The waves and billows which agitate Christians on life's sea, are pride, which puffeth up, and anger, which rageth like the wrathful surge. The craving of avarice, whose thirst of gold is as insatiable as the whirlpool, swallows up

Christians whose virtues rose superior to all other temptations, just as the maelstrom draws into its vortex, craft that successfully contended against all of ocean's storms.

Men at sea have danger to fear from the air, which, from the gentle breezes and favorable winds that fill their sails and drive them on their way, is often changed into howling tempests and destructive hurricanes, which, despite the efforts of skilful commanders and valiant crews, drive them out of their course, on to the shore, and against rocks. Christians have like dangers to fear from the votaries of the world. These, at one time, by their favor and assistance, promote men's ambitions; at another, by their jealousies, calumnies, and injuries, drive them to despair.

Men at sea have danger to fear from fire, that useful servant but woeful master. It matters little whether it bursts out from within, or comes from without, in the lightning's bolt,—it leaves them often but a choice between drowning and cremation. Christians, in like manner, have danger to fear from the fire of concupiscence, which now bursts forth in burning lust, again, strikes them in the shape of the demon's fiery darts.

Men at sea have danger to fear from the monsters of the deep, which follow their vessels to devour the dead who may be cast out for burial,

or the living who may chance to fall into the sea. Christians have danger to fear from those whom vice has converted into monsters, who are ever on the alert, to destroy eternally the sinner and the saint.

Men feel how utterly helpless they are, when the elements and darkness combine against them at sea. The very vastness of the sea fills them with anxiety and fear. Christians feel, it is only Omnipotence that can protect them in the midst of temptation, prevent them from being submerged and lost, when they fall into the sea of sin.

Since, then, this world is so truly compared to a sea, and men to sailors, how necessary it is, that the Christian should have a star to guide him, by its unfailing light, amid the dangers that beset life's voyage! How fortunate, that he should have the STAR OF THE SEA to conduct him across the ocean of life, amid the darkness of sin, to "the Port of Safety and the Light of Eternal Day!" Mary's name to the Christian voyager, gives light and strength, consolation and hope.

In one respect, the Star of the Sea is unlike all other stars. Astronomy has enabled us to measure the heavens, to describe the courses of the planets, and thus, to calculate with exactness the time a star will appear to the inhabitants of any

particular section or country. The Star of the Sea has no limited orbit, no specified time for appearing to the people of any land. It shines alike, and at the same time, upon every sea and shore.

Mary, then, is "the Star which," (according to St. Bernard), "was to come out of Jacob, whose brightness still sheddeth lustre on the whole earth, whose rays are most brilliant in heaven, and shine even unto hell, lighting up earth midway, warming souls rather than bodies, fostering good, and scaring away evil. She is a clear and shining star, twinkling with excellencies, resplendent with example, needfully set to look down on the great, wide sea of this world. Whoever thou art," (continues the Saint), "who findest thyself not walking on firm ground, but battered to and fro by the gales and storms of life's ocean, if thou wouldst not be overwhelmed by the tempest, keep thine eyes fixed on this Star's clear shining, call upon Mary."

The influence that the light of Mary's example has had on the world may be known from the fact, that of two hundred and sixty millions of Catholics, every eye is turned towards the STAR OF THE SEA,—the name of Mary is upon every tongue. The child, among its first prayers, lisps: "Hail Mary, full of grace!" Old age, borne down

under the weight of its infirmities and, perhaps, of sorrows, tottering on the verge of the grave, mutters: "Holy Mary, pray for us at the hour of our death!"

Mary's name, says a writer of the day, is invoked alike by the king and by the peasant, by him who was made a Christian in early infancy, and by the stalwart savage, just emerging from the darkness of heathenism; by the priest and by the layman; by the monk and by the nun; by the soldier in the deadly strife of battle, and by the sailor in the tempest of the deep; it is invoked alike by the living and by the dying. The praises of Mary's name are sung at the fireside, and in the sanctuary, in Rome's gorgeous Cathedral, and in the little Indian chapel; they are sung in every land, at every hour, and in every form of speech, since that sacred moment, when the Archangel proclaimed her: "Full of grace, blessed among women."

We need not appeal to Catholic witnesses to prove the veneration in which she who bore the name of Mary, was held by the faithful of past ages; for we have the testimony of our dissenting brethren on this point. Many of these, dissatisfied with the religion which the Protestantism of to-day afforded them, resolved to wander back the stream of Christianity, in the hope, that the nearer

they approached its source, the purer would be the water which they could drink in. There are non-Catholics in this state, to-day, who tell us that they have searched the writings of the early Fathers, only to make it plain, that the Christians of the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries, just as the Roman Catholics of the nineteenth century, worshipped God, and at the same time, honored Mary, the Mother of His Son. The hymns and canticles of those early saints and sages are still sung in Mary's honor in our churches; and their harmony mingles sweetly with the thrilling strains of Dominic, Bernard, and Liguori, of later days.

Notwithstanding, that the priests and prophets of the Jewish nation were constituted by God the rulers of His people, yet Christ did not manifest Himself to the levites or doctors of the law, but to poor illiterate shepherds, guarding their flocks on Bethlehem's hills. To these, it was, that the angelic choir sang the first *Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus.* Mary, imitating the example of her Divine Son, has not revealed herself in all the power of her name, to the princes of the Church, or to the kings of the earth, but to the humble and poor of Jesus Christ. To those, who honored her in simplicity and faith, with pure heart and upright intention,—to little shepherds

and shepherdesses, guarding their flocks on the lonely hillside and in the lowly valley, she has designated spots, far removed from the turmoil of the world, where she desired to be specially honored, and where she declared the power of her name would be signally manifested. Some of these places have merited the name of SANCTUARIES.

To these shrines, might have been seen, and may still be seen, processions numbering thousands, (and on the great feasts of Jesus and Mary, tens of thousands), wending their way from city, town, and hamlet, turning the forests, through which they passed, into grand Cathedrals, resonant with Mary's praises. With Mary's name inscribed upon their banners, and with that name cherished in their hearts, they presented to the world, the sublime spectacle of entire peoples honoring her, "in whom He, that hath shown might in His arm, hath done great things."

It is true, that the Protestant world, scandalized at these manifestations of devotion to the ever-blessed Mother of Jesus, has raised the cry of superstition. SUPERSTITION! Has not our Divine Lord given us a rule, by which to determine whether men are actuated by the Holy Spirit, or by the spirit of evil? He asks: "Can an evil tree bear good fruit?" "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" And does He not

declare: "By their fruits, ye shall know them"?

Communities, that had been notorious for their disorders and crimes, for their profanation of the name of Jesus, after a pilgrimage to those shrines, became models of virtue. At those sanctuaries, 'such were the fruits of grace,' that the most hardened sinners were moved to repentance, and fountains of water came to eyes that had never shed a tear of pity,—cheeks were suffused that had never blanched at the most appalling crime, or blushed at the most degrading vice. Prodigals came back in such numbers, that hundreds of confessors were unable to receive the contrite acknowledgments of their sins; and at some of those hallowed places, over a million communions are administered annually. Well may the Church describe Mary's influence at these places, in the words of to-day's Epistle: "As the vine, I brought forth a pleasant odor: and my flowers are the fruit of honor and riches. I am the mother of fair love, of fear, and of holy hope. In me, is all grace of the way and the truth, is all hope of life and virtue."

At these holy places, the power of Mary's name had influence not only over the soul, but also on the body. These words of the Gospel were fulfilled in them: "The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the poor have the

gospel preached to them." In those sanctuaries might have been seen, and may still be seen, (where the spoiler's hand has not touched the gold and silver offerings), *ex-votos*, commemorative of the cures effected through the power of Mary's name.

If we are told, that the reality of these miracles was questioned, that they were ascribed to priest-craft, we simply reply, that a truth does not cease to be a truth, because people have had the temerity to question it, or the effrontery to deny it. Our Lord's miracles were questioned,—and why? In order that the very means used to discredit them might prove them, and publish them to all men; and put to confusion those who assailed them.

No more striking instance can be adduced of how every effort to disprove Christ's miracles but served to establish their genuineness and make them better known, than the action of the Pharisees regarding the miracle by which the eyes of the blind beggar had been opened. Here, was a man, whose blindness was known to all; for he had been for years a wayside beggar. When he came from the pool of Siloe, seeing,—the Pharisees questioned his identity. His neighbors said: "This is he, that sat and begged. Others said: No, but he is like him. But he said: I am he."

When asked how he had recovered his sight, he said: "That man that is called Jesus, made

clay, and anointed my eyes, and said to me; Go to the pool of Siloe, and wash. And I went, I washed, and I see.

"Some therefore of the Pharisees said: This man is not of God, who keepeth not the Sabbath. But others said: How can a man that is a sinner, do such miracles? And there was a dissension among them.

"They, therefore, said to the blind man again: What dost thou say of him that opened thy eyes? And he said: He is a prophet."

Still the Jews did not believe in this miracle, and they called his parents to contradict him. St. John tells us, that they asked them: "Is this your son, who, you say, was born blind? How then doth he now see?"

The parents from fear of the Jews only said: "We know this is our son, and that he was born blind. But how he seeth, we know not, or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: Ask himself, he is of age, let him speak for himself."

When, therefore, they questioned the blind man again, he said: "I have told you already, and you have heard: why would you hear it again? Will you also become his disciples?"

Then they began to revile the blind man for being a disciple of Jesus, only to elicit a reply that utterly confounded them. He said to them:

"We know that God doth not hear sinners: but if a man be a server of God, and doth his will, he heareth him.

"From the beginning of the world, it has not been heard, that any man opened the eyes of one born blind.

"Unless this man were of God he could not do anything."

Thus, their endeavors to destroy the effect of this miracle, most publicly and conclusively established the identity of the person, the reality of the miracle; and that God was with him who wrought it.

In like manner did it happen, when the miracles wrought through the invocation of Mary's name were questioned. When the identity of the persons or the reality of the cures was denied, those who had known the afflicted ones from their birth, came forward, Protestants and Catholics, neighbors and friends alike, and said: This is he or she, that was born blind, or deaf, or lame. Protestant physicians testified that they had prescribed for them during years, and that the ailment was incurable by any human means. In this way, the reality of these miracles, as well as their heavenly origin, were proved by unimpeachable witnesses.

If the crowds that came to those sanctuaries to honor Mary, are contrasted with those who came

to destroy "the superstition," (as they called it), we can easily see in which was "the finger of God."

In the throngs that honored Mary, were reconciliations, peace, the restoration of ill-gotten goods, and amendment of life. Of them, the words of the Epistle were true: "He that hearkeneth to me shall not be confounded, and they that work by me shall not sin."

While in those that came to destroy devotion to her, were rapine and bloodshed. In this, as in many other cases of "reform," avarice assumed the mien of religious zeal. The sanctuaries were robbed of the gold and silver ornaments with which grateful people had enriched them, the miraculous pictures were burned, and, in one instant, a statue, venerated alike for its antiquity and the devotion engendered at its pedestal, was hollowed out, and converted into a drinking-trough for swine.

The spirit that animated the destroyers was manifest. They could not endure the spectacle of Catholics, especially of wives and daughters, kneeling before a picture or a statue of the Immaculate Mother of God. Oh! no. Hence, they must prevent Catholic women from looking into Mary's face, in which are mirrored forth charity, joy, peace, all the seven-fold gifts of the Holy

Ghost; they must prevent them from learning from this heavenly model, humility, obedience, holy purity. Such devotion as this, in the eyes of the destroyers, was a degrading superstition.

But what would these "reformers" give in exchange for Mary? Why, one of those crowds on its return to Paris, repaired to the Cathedral of Notre Dame, and taking a fallen woman, and decking her out in the haberdashery of the Goddess of Reason, they placed her upon the Altar of God. Was she not a fit deity, indeed, to preside over their worse than pagan orgies!

Need we ask, where was "the finger of God"? The spirit opposed to Mary led men away from God, brutalized, nay demonized them, made the world blush with shame, and burn with indignation at the abominations and uncleannesses, into which men abandoned by God's grace are permitted to fall.

On the other hand, the spirit that dictated devotion to Mary, ever led men to Jesus, inspired them with obedience to his law, and love of the virtues of which He has left us an example. Thus, Mary was ever presenting her Divine Son to men, just as she presented Him to the shepherds at Bethlehem, ever urging them to love Jesus as she had loved Him.

Mary declared all generations would call her

blessed; and we have seen how literally this prophecy has been fulfilled. Mary's name has not only been blessed on earth, it is a name of benediction also in heaven. In the visions vouchsafed St. John, in the revelations of "that Jerusalem which is above," the Evangelist does not tell us he heard Angels singing anthems to Mary; but what pencil of painter, what imagination of poet, could give us an idea of the magnificence with which Mary is surrounded above, comparable with that which the Beloved Disciple gives us, when he tells us, that he saw Mary in heaven, where all things are great, as a great wonder, as the Woman clothed with the sun, the moon under her feet, and a crown of twelve stars upon her head.

Yet, why should we be surprised at this vision of the Prophet of Patmos! Who was it that first proclaimed Mary, FULL OF GRACE, or, as some translate it, "formed in grace," BLESSED AMONG WOMEN, or, as some versions have it, blessed more than or beyond all women? These words were first uttered not on earth, but in heaven; not by the lips of man or angel, but by God the Father. He it was, that sent this message to earth. Gabriel, in delivering it, but spoke in the name of the Lord, just as the Angel of old, in speaking to Moses, could say: "I am thy Lord and God." Indeed,

as we listen to the words spoken by Gabriel, it is not difficult to picture the Eternal Father, leaning from his throne, as if lost in wonder, while He contemplates this flower of such surpassing beauty, exhaling so exquisite a perfume, that filled with admiration at its loveliness, He calls the highest minister of His court, to convey to Mary the sentiments contained in the Angelic Salutation.

Mary's name is thrice dear to us, because honored and consecrated by Jesus. Who can estimate the honor the Son of God conferred upon Mary, by assuming His humanity from her, by drawing from her heart the blood He was to shed for the redemption of the world; by not only allowing His form and features to be fashioned after hers, (as Doctor Newman says), but also His disposition to be moulded by the sentiments of her head and her heart? Who can estimate the honor Jesus did Mary, in obeying her, and loving her as His mother—in being subject to her? What an example has He not left us in this! What do we need more, to incite us to have recourse to our Blessed Mother, than to know that every look of the Babe of Bethlehem was an appeal to Mary, that every cry from His infant lips, during the flight into Egypt, was an appeal to Mary, that during the seven years' sojourn in that heathen

land, every time He took refuge from the stern-visaged pagans beneath the folds of His mother's mantle, was an appeal to Mary? Did not Jesus wish us to imitate Him, in flying to Mary, as to a mother, when from the Cross, He said to us, in the person of St. John: "Son, behold thy Mother"?

Why, then, should we not honor and imitate Mary, whom all the just on earth have honored and imitated; in whom the Angels rejoice, as in their queen; whose praises, God the Father has proclaimed through the mouth of the Archangel Gabriel, just as God, the Holy Ghost, has proclaimed them through the mouth of Elizabeth?

Let us, then, invoke the name of Mary, not only that it may stimulate us to imitate her virtues, but also that it may protect us in all dangers; for if it recalls one who is our model, it also reminds us of one who has power to defend us. Mary's name is a name of power. When the darkness of despair settled upon the earth, when Satan sat enthroned in Paradise, as the prince of this world, the first ray of light, the first gleam of hope that came to a fallen world, came through the STAR OF THE SEA, came through Mary, came through the promise of THE WOMAN who would crush the Serpent's head.

When Mary visited Elizabeth, such was the

power of her presence, that at the sound of her voice, the Baptist leaped in his mother's womb, for joy at the sanctification Mary brought him.

At Cana, her influence in behalf of the newly-wedded couple, gently constrained her Son to work a miracle to relieve their embarrassment, and to bring a heavenly joy to their union.

What need *we* fear, if protected by the power of this name! Let this sacred name be our shield against every danger; let the STAR OF THE SEA light us in all dangers during life's hazardous voyage; let the name of Mary be always upon our lips during life, and at the hour of death; let us be numbered among her spiritual children; and with her, we shall wage successful warfare with the enemy of souls, crush the Serpent's head, and, at last, being permitted to see her, as St. John saw her, the glorious Queen of heaven, clothed with the sun, the moon beneath her feet, and crowned with twelve stars, with her, we shall sing the everlasting trisagion: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts!"

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